



## **LEGISLATIVE ALERT**

December 17, 2015

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I write to express our views on the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016. Though the purpose of the year-end negotiation was to avoid a government shutdown, much of the controversy grew out of Republican demands for dozens of ideological riders that resulted in difficult compromises. We are pleased, however, that the final package provides for increases in funding for education, transportation, and worker protection programs above the levels provided in the original appropriations bills, and that it rejects most of the ideological riders that would have rolled back key protections for working families.

The omnibus appropriations package will help our nation's workers in several additional ways. Importantly, it reauthorizes the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act. The bill essentially makes permanent, through a 75-year reauthorization, the 9/11 World Trade Center Health program, and extends the compensation program for five years. This will give 9/11 responders and survivors peace of mind that they will continue to receive the healthcare and compensation they need and deserve. The package also delays the so-called "Cadillac tax" for two years, providing time for further efforts to repeal this policy which has already caused many workers—union and non-union alike—to face a hollowing out of their health insurance coverage.

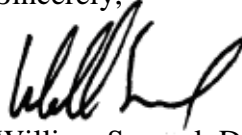
Republican efforts to insert riders targeted at worker protections and safeguards for middle-income Americans were, in most cases, rebuffed. Draconian cuts to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the Wage and Hour Division were rejected. Riders to block worker protections, such as the Department of Labor's silica standard and retirement investment advice regulations, were removed. In addition, the NLRB's joint employer standard was protected, and efforts to override the rights of workers employed by tribal organizations were quashed. Also, the bill preserved Dodd-Frank financial regulations, which will help reduce the risk of future financial catastrophes.

Legislation of this scope, advanced on a short timeline, often includes harmful provisions. We are deeply disappointed by the inclusion of riders modifying the H-2B program that could more than triple the number of guest worker visas while rolling back basic protections for U.S. and foreign workers. These provisions will degrade wages and conditions for workers in dangerous industries and will gut standards that ensure that U.S. workers can fairly compete for jobs.

We are also extremely concerned that the bill fails to provide adequate relief for Puerto Rico in light of its severe fiscal crisis and potential upcoming default. Congress must act soon to reduce the threat of an austerity agenda that will cost thousands of jobs, depress wages and jeopardize the pensions of countless retirees.

On the whole, we are pleased that the package avoids much of the harm that riders in earlier bills would have caused, while providing some helpful funding increases and relief for America's working families. The bill does, however, create a need for future work to strengthen H-2B protections for good jobs and to address the fiscal crisis in Puerto Rico.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Samuel', written in a cursive style.

William Samuel, Director  
Government Affairs Department

WS/lkr