



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Van Hollen Opening Statement at the House Budget Committee Mark Up of the Sequestration Transparency Act of 2012

“We should come together in a balanced way, in the way bipartisan groups have recommended”

Washington, DC – *Today Maryland Congressman Chris Van Hollen, Ranking Member of the House Budget Committee, delivered an opening statement at the House Budget Committee Mark Up of the Sequestration Transparency Act of 2012. Below is a transcript of his remarks:*

“Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the Chairman indicated, I think there is general bipartisan agreement that the across-the-board, meat-ax cuts that are set to begin in January will be bad for the country. Not only will the overall size and immediacy of the cuts put a drag on an already-dragging economy, but the arbitrary buzz-saw nature of the cuts would wreak havoc on defense and non-defense programs alike.

“As Secretary Panetta made clear, both the magnitude and the arbitrary nature of the cuts will damage our national defense. What has received far less attention is the devastating impact the cuts will have on other vital services and investments: cutting our air traffic controllers and putting air safety at risk; putting the public safety at risk by cutting the FBI; cutting the COPS program; cutting border security; putting food safety at risk; cutting our investment in early education, K-12, and special education for kids with disabilities; and cuts in vital investments for our economy in transportation, science, and research.

“In fact, a coalition of universities and groups, including the American Cancer Society, the Biotechnologies Industry Association, Pharma, and others, have concluded that the cuts to the National Institutes of Health will jeopardize America’s competitive edge in medical research and result in the loss of more than 33,000 jobs in the biotech sector. Scientific research into treatments and cures to cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, and other diseases that plague American families will be put on the chopping block along with our competitive edge in this important area of research.

“So Mr. Chairman, I’m all for getting more detailed information about the negative impacts of the meat-ax cuts, but I think our focus should be on avoiding what you just said – and we all agree – is an irresponsible approach to the budget and would be an irresponsible approach to cutting the budget. And that means coming up with an alternative approach to reducing the deficit in a credible and stable way.

“Every bipartisan group that has examined this challenge has concluded that we need to take a balanced approach to deficit reduction, meaning combining cuts with revenues generated by cutting a lot of the unnecessary tax breaks and special interest loopholes. Now, the Budget Control Act – which was passed last summer – already cuts the budget by almost \$1 trillion over 10 years – 100 percent cuts. Putting aside the fact the House Republican budget violates that agreement by cutting another \$19 billion, the appropriators are hard at work trying to find a way to make those cuts in a targeted fashion. If we want to do our job, and replace the sequester and find another way to reduce the deficit, we should come together in a balanced way, in the way bipartisan groups have recommended. And that means, as I said, not just cuts to programs but also cutting tax loopholes. Now, I agree with the Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Buck McKeon, who said just the other day, ‘why don’t we do something to fix it now?’ We should.

“In fact, the Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, last October, when asked about using some revenue to prevent defense cuts said, ‘If it came that I had only two choices, one was a tax increase and one was a cut in defense over and above where we already are, I would go to strengthen defense.’ Senator McCain, just the other day, made the point that when you eliminate a special interest tax break, like ethanol subsidies, there is no rational reason why you shouldn’t be able to apply that savings to deficit reduction, including deficit reduction that will prevent the sequester from taking place. So, it was unfortunately counterproductive that Grover Norquist was back on the Hill this week in front of the Ways and Means Committee, again enforcing a rule that prevents Republicans who sign a pledge from closing one special interest tax loophole for the purpose of preventing

defense cuts. So at the end of the day, that was the choice that was made.

“I hope people will make the choice that Chairman McKeon laid out earlier, which is a willingness to shut down special interest loopholes in order to prevent deep, across-the-board cuts to both defense and non-defense programs, and reduce the deficit in a more rational way.

“Thank you, Mr. Chairman.”

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