

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 20, 2015

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey,

We write in opposition to funding requests in the President's Fiscal Year 2016 budget proposal relating to the United Nations' Green Climate Fund. While the proposal seeks to increase the already substantial U.S. contributions to climate-related financing for developing nations, Congress must first address the most pressing priorities for the American people amidst serious fiscal constraints.

Congress has never authorized funding for the Green Climate Fund.¹ Yet on November 15, 2014, President Obama pledged an initial \$3 billion during the G-20 meetings in Australia, and his FY 2016 Budget requests that we begin to fulfill that commitment. However, this pledge and funding request comes before us while Congress must navigate serious budget constraints. For example, the United States already operates with more than \$18 trillion in debt, which is projected to continue to rise. The Congressional Budget Office stated in its most recent long-term budget outlook that:

“The high and rising amounts of federal debt held by the public that CBO projects for the coming decades under the extended baseline would have significant negative consequences for the economy in the long term and would impose significant constraints on future budget policy. In particular, the projected amounts of debt would reduce the total amounts of national saving and income in the long term; increase the government's interest payments, thereby putting more pressure on the rest of the budget; limit lawmakers' flexibility to respond to unforeseen events; and increase the likelihood of a fiscal crisis.”

This request from the President appears to be just the beginning of a commitment to the United Nations that could dwarf previous such climate commitments made by the United States government. The Green Climate Fund's Executive Director recently stated that estimated

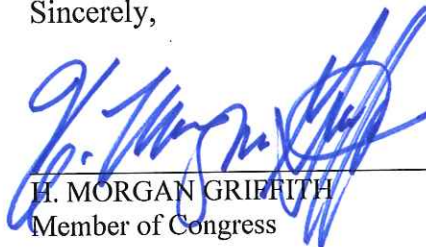
¹ The Green Climate Fund was announced at the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Conference in the so-called Copenhagen Accord, a non-legally binding, political document. In subsequent meetings of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UNFCCC established the fund with headquarters in Songdo, South Korea and the Fund became operational in 2014. In terms of funding, the Copenhagen Accord stated that the Fund would have “a goal of mobilizing jointly USD 100 billion a year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries.” See Copenhagen Accord available at <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2009/cop15/eng/11a01.pdf>, p. 7. Negotiations concerning the Fund will be underway during the Paris Conference of Parties, this coming December, evaluation of which cannot be completed before Congress makes its budgetary decisions. For background on the Fund, see http://unfccc.int/cooperation_and_support/financial_mechanism/green_climate_fund/items/5869.php.

funding needed by developing countries would increase to \$450 billion per year after 2020.² The United Nations' top climate change official, Christiana Figueres, has described the current goal of \$100 billion as "peanuts" and envisions trillions of dollars in spending over the next 15 years.³

Against this backdrop, we are concerned about making any commitments to support new funding through the Green Climate Fund given the U.S. Government's already significant climate change related spending to date. In particular, American taxpayers have already expended tens of billions of dollars on climate change related activities through the funding of agencies across the government, including technical and financial assistance for climate change activities in the developing world through a variety of bilateral and multilateral programs.⁴ According to the Office of Management and Budget, federal climate change expenditures were projected to exceed \$22 billion in 2013. To begin to fund yet another climate finance program with expectations that the United States will provide additional billions in funding or financial assistance in coming years would add significantly to what is already tens of billions of dollars of climate spending by American taxpayers.

As stewards of taxpayer dollars, and in light of our substantial budget priorities, we cannot support this request for funding for the Green Climate Fund, especially if the terms and conditions to pay such funds are not brought before Congress for approval as required by the U.S. Constitution.

Sincerely,



H. MORGAN GRIFFITH
Member of Congress

² See June 5, 2015 article available at <http://www.trust.org/item/20150605120716-naxt1/>.

³ See Oct. 27, 2015 article available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/27/climatechange-summit-decarbonisation-idUSL8N12R1ES20151027>.

⁴ See, e.g., Congressional Research Service, "International Climate Change Financing: The Green Climate Fund (GCF)," Feb. 2, 2015. In 2011, the Government Accountability Office issued a report tracking climate change related funding going back to 1993 and estimating that it increased from \$2.3 billion in 1993 to over \$8.7 billion in 2010. The Congressional Research Service estimated in 2012 that climate change funding for climate science, technology, international assistance and adaptation was approximately \$70 billion for the period 2008 through 2012. The State Department reports that over the period 2010-2014, the United States provided \$12.8 billion in U.S. public climate finance for developing countries.

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