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Kline Statement: Hearing on "Reviewing the President's Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Proposal for the Department of Labor"

WASHINGTON, D.C. | March 18, 2015 - The American people have been through a lot since the recession began more than seven years ago. Millions of jobs destroyed. Household incomes plummeted. Hard-earned savings wiped out. Hopes and dreams shattered. We all welcome the progress seen in recent months, but make no mistake, we still have a long way to go before every American is able to get back on a path to a lifetime of success.

Right now, roughly 15 million workers are in desperate need of full-time jobs, and that does not include the millions of individuals so discouraged by meager job prospects that they have simply dropped out of the workforce. Meanwhile, working families face high health care costs and stagnant wages, and they are struggling to send their kids to college and plan for retirement.

As policymakers, we have an obligation to these men and women to do better. They are not willing to accept a new normal of anemic growth and flat incomes. Neither should we, yet that is precisely what the president's budget would force us to do. As is often said, a budget reflects priorities, and it is clear the president's priorities continue to be more spending, more taxes, and more debt.

The facts speak for themselves. The president's budget includes \$547 billion in new spending and a \$1.8 trillion tax increase. Despite taking more money from hard-working Americans, the president's budget never balances. In fact, over the next 10 years, it would add \$6.7 trillion to the national debt. This is not a roadmap leading to a stronger middle-class, but a blueprint for more government at the expense of the middle-class.

This flawed approach is reflected in the president's budget for the Department of Labor. The administration is requesting an 11 percent increase in discretionary spending for the department and an astounding \$41.5 billion in new mandatory spending. Will these additional taxpayer dollars be spent reducing regulatory burdens, streamlining the bureaucracy, and encouraging better enforcement of federal laws? Not likely.

Instead, the new money will be spent imposing more rules on more Americans, including workers employed by federal contractors, the elderly and those with disabilities who rely on in-home companion care, and men and women who need help saving for retirement. It will also be spent creating new programs and layers of bureaucracy.

For example, we recently passed bipartisan legislation streamlining the workforce investment system, and already the president is demanding five new workforce development programs. Congress made it easier for job seekers to acquire new skills and get back to work, yet the president is determined to make a maze of programs more complex and confusing.

The president's budget is one of misplaced priorities and missed opportunities. We can invest in policies and programs that will make a real difference in the lives of countless Americans, without growing the size, cost, and reach of the federal government. Middle-class families are being squeezed, and the last thing we should do is double-down on failed policies.

We can do better and we know how to do better. Last year, Republicans and Democrats came together to enact meaningful job training legislation that will put Americans back to work, and we passed important reforms to strengthen the financial security of workers and retirees in the multiemployer pension system. Secretary Perez, thank you for your support as Congress worked on these bipartisan efforts.

It is time to find other areas of agreement, like modernizing an outdated multiemployer pension system, simplifying the regulations surrounding federal wage and hour law, and opening new markets for American-made goods. Let's ensure the people's priorities are our priorities by rejecting the president's budget and embracing pro-growth reforms that help every American enjoy a lifetime of opportunity and success.

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