

RE: H.R. 4660, Support Moore Amendment Concerning funding to the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR)

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union, please find attached our vote recommendation in favor of Representative Gwen Moore's proposed Amendment to H.R. 4660, the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2015 increasing funding to the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR). A recorded vote on this amendment is anticipated on the House floor today or tomorrow.

Please call Neema Singh Guliani (202-675-2322) or Chris Rickerd (202-675-2339) with any questions.

Regards,

Laura W. Murphy
Director, Washington Legislative Office

Neema Singh Guliani
Legislative Counsel

ACLU Recommends a YES vote for Moore Amendment on EOIR Funding to H.R. 4660

This amendment would provide an additional \$1,000,000 of funding to the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), which is responsible for conducting immigration court proceedings, appellate reviews, and administrative hearings. This expenditure would be offset by a reduction in administrative expenses for the Department of Justice.

The American Civil Liberties Union recommends a YES vote on the Moore amendment for the following reasons:

EOIR is severely underfunded, causing a major court backlog that slows the entire immigration system.

While immigration enforcement spending grew by about 300 percent between fiscal years 2002-13, EOIR funding grew by just 70 percent in the same period, leaving immigration courts unequipped to handle the resulting influx of cases. This has created a serious bottleneck in the system, slowing immigration proceedings and prolonging detention. The average wait for an immigration court hearing is now about 580 days, with a nationwide backlog of around 367,000 cases. Overworked Immigration Judges face their growing dockets without the support staff and resources considered basic in most other federal courts.

Recently, the courts have also been hit hard by a moth long hardware failure affecting the computer system that maintains every docket, delaying a still-unknown number of cases around the country. Additional funding is needed to address this serious crisis by hiring more judges and giving them the resources they need to address the backlog and modernize the systems that run the courts.

EOIR's funds cover programs that improve court efficiency.

This includes the Legal Orientation Program (LOP), which educates immigrants in removal proceedings so that they can better understand their legal options and make more informed decisions—particularly important considering that approximately 41 percent of those awaiting hearings before an immigration judge don't have legal representation, with even higher numbers for those in detention. Both these EOIR programs improve court efficiency, save DHS money, and enhance due process.

For more information, please contact Neema Singh Guliani (202-675-2322 or nguliani@aclu.org) or Chris Rickerd (202-675-2339 or crickerd@aclu.org)