

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 21, 2014

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hagel:

We write to express our deep concern with the Department of the Army's proposal to cut Army National Guard combat aviation assets and force structure. While we are aware that the Army's budget request for fiscal year 2015 is pre-decisional, every indication including public statements and briefings from Army leadership on Capitol Hill suggests the decision was made without meaningful consultation with the Army National Guard. This shortsighted approach creates unnecessary risk to our national security at the expense of incredibly capable attack aviation assets in the Army National Guard.

It has also come to our attention that the Guard has attempted to work with the Army on ways to implement necessary budget cuts by proposing alternatives that satisfy the Army National Guard's proportional share of reductions required by the Budget Control Act. Their proposal sustains Army National Guard aviation force structure and garners savings from other areas while assuming minimal readiness risk and sustaining much needed capacity for national defense and unforeseen contingencies.

As you know, the country has invested so much in the men and women of our National Guard to ensure that they are an augmentable, operational force. We need to continue to organize, train, equip, and manage them in a manner commensurate with their invaluable role in national security. To squander these investments would be an incredibly shortsighted mistake.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you work with the Army and the National Guard on a solution that fully takes into account national security needs as well as state domestic response obligations. We are confident that a resolution can be reached. However, in the absence of a reasonable solution, Congress will look for ways to ensure that the Total Army is balanced in ways that meet our nation's security interests, now and in the future, that take into account Total Army requirements, capabilities and costs. In addition, because the Army's current proposal to cut Guard attack aviation assets creates unnecessary and irreversible impact to our combat aviation force, we would also look to prevent all Army National Guard aviation force structure transfers and retirements until further review.

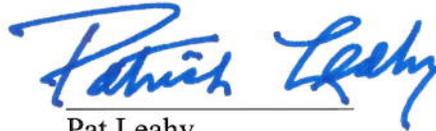
Our country deserves the best Army we can afford to meet the nation's most urgent threats – one that is smaller, expandable, interchangeable and experienced. We believe the National Guard can be part of a cost effective security solution that retains affordable security for peacetime as well as the ability to respond to unforeseen, future contingencies.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Roy Blunt
United States Senator



Pat Leahy
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



James Risch
United States Senator



Orrin Hatch
United States Senator



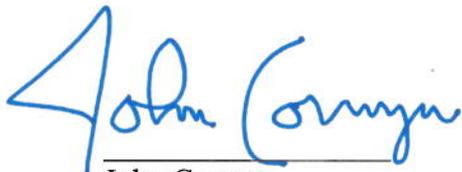
Mike Lee
United States Senator



Lamar Alexander
United States Senator



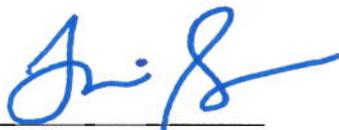
Claire McCaskill
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



Lindsey Graham
United States Senator



Tim Scott
United States Senator



Robert Casey
United States Senator

Chuck Grassley

Chuck Grassley
United States Senator