

February 2010

The Honorable Howard McKeon
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman McKeon:

2010 is a crucial year for national defense and our currently serving and retired military families. In this new legislative year, I write to urge your support on two particularly important priorities.

First, it is essential to sustain the Defense budget at levels required to meet pressing requirements for both personnel and weapons/equipment programs. In times of mounting deficits, some are tempted to cut back on personnel and family support programs. That would be a tragic mistake.

Despite increases in force levels, deployment requirements will increase even faster with the planned force build-up in Afghanistan — significantly increasing the already intolerable burdens imposed on military families and compounding risks of traumatic injuries from repeated deployments.

These terrible sacrifices haven't yet caused major retention problems — but that's no reason to assume military families will tolerate such conditions indefinitely. Despite good-faith efforts to support their needs and those of the wounded, many urgent shortfalls remain.

Second, I urge your continued vigilance in preserving the unique military health care benefit that is an essential offset to the extraordinary demands and sacrifices inherent in a service career. The uniformed services community is grateful for Congress' strong support on this issue, but beneficiary concerns remain high.

In that regard, it is essential to protect against any unintended adverse consequences from national health care reform on uniformed service or VA health coverage, including TRICARE For Life, as well as to guard against disproportional fee increases such as those proposed in the recent past.

You and the Armed Services Committee have been the champions in protecting military beneficiaries on these issues in the past, and we depend on you for continued leadership in support of currently serving and retired servicemembers and their families and survivors.

Sincerely,

February 2010

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

2010 is a crucial year for national defense and our currently serving and retired military families. In this new legislative year, I write to urge your support on two particularly important priorities.

First, it is essential to sustain the Defense budget at levels required to meet pressing requirements for both personnel and weapons/equipment programs. In times of mounting deficits, some are tempted to cut back on personnel and family support programs. That would be a tragic mistake.

Despite increases in force levels, deployment requirements will increase even faster with the planned force build-up in Afghanistan — significantly increasing the already intolerable burdens imposed on military families and compounding risks of traumatic injuries from repeated deployments.

These terrible sacrifices haven't yet caused major retention problems — but that's no reason to assume military families will tolerate such conditions indefinitely. Despite good-faith efforts to support their needs and those of the wounded, many urgent shortfalls remain.

Second, I urge your continued vigilance in preserving the unique military health care benefit that is an essential offset to the extraordinary demands and sacrifices inherent in a service career. The uniformed services community is grateful for Congress' strong support on this issue, but beneficiary concerns remain high.

In that regard, it is essential to protect against any unintended adverse consequences from national health care reform on uniformed service or VA health coverage, including TRICARE For Life, as well as to guard against disproportional fee increases such as those proposed in the recent past.

You and the Armed Services Committee have been the champions in protecting military beneficiaries on these issues in the past, and we depend on you for continued leadership in support of currently serving and retired servicemembers and their families and survivors.

Sincerely,