Prevent Cuts to Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH)

**Issue and Request:** The administration and the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) draft of the defense authorization bill propose to reduce Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) benefits by 5 percent.

The House rejected the administration proposal to cut BAH benefits in its version of the defense authorization bill (H.R. 4435).

The Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) included the BAH cuts in its draft of the defense bill (S. 2410).

**Background:** Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) is intended to provide eligible servicemembers with housing compensation matching civilian rental costs in the area where they are stationed, based on rank and number of dependents.

For years, servicemembers were expected to pay a significant percentage of their own off-post housing costs. By the late ‘90s, servicemembers were being forced to absorb almost 20 percent of their off-base housing costs. These costs in addition to years of pay caps led to a retention and recruiting crisis.

In the early 2000s – at the behest of DoD leadership – Congress remedied the situation by closing the gap between BAH stipends and average local costs.

Congress and the Pentagon made a long-term commitment to appropriately fund servicemembers’ quality of life. Reducing BAH now after nearly a decade reverses DoD’s own initiative to eliminate out-of-pocket housing costs completed in 2005.

In May, the House rejected the administration’s proposals to reduce BAH rates. The Senate needs to do the same.

This proposal simply shifts the costs of sustaining the all-volunteer force onto the currently serving and attempts to balance DoD’s budget on the backs of servicemembers and their families.

**Recommendation:** For Senators, we ask that you support Senator Mark Begich’s expected amendment to strike Sec. 603 of the FY 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (S. 2410) during the upcoming floor debate.

For members of the House, we thank you for your support of BAH in your version of the defense bill (H.R. 4435) and ask that you do all you can ensure it is preserved during conference with the Senate.