

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
April 27, 2012

Chairman Buck McKeon
House Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman C.W. Bill Young
Subcommittee on Defense
House Appropriations Committee
H-405, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Adam Smith
House Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Norm Dicks
Subcommittee on Defense
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman McKeon, Chairman Young, Ranking Member Smith, and Ranking Member Dicks,

As your committee considers defense authorization and appropriations legislation for 2013, I write with serious concern regarding the Air Force's recent decisions on force restructuring and its impact on the Air National Guard.

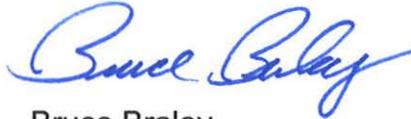
The combat aircraft retirements and personnel decisions discussed in the Air Force's recent proposal unduly affects the Air National Guard over the Active Component, and does not reflect an effort to support our national defense in a cost effective manner by maintaining the Guard and Reserve or taking a balanced approach to achieving budget efficiencies. The Iowa Air National Guard units in Des Moines and Sioux City exemplify the highly efficient, cost-effective, experienced force the Air National Guard provides. They've successfully deployed numerous times over the last decade in support of combat operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya, while personnel have displayed their experience, expertise and proficiency in executing missions and maintaining their aircraft ready for future deployment. The Guard and Reserve are highly efficient forces, maintaining experienced pilots and performing many of the same missions of Active Component forces when activated, all at a much lower cost than the Active Component over the long-term due to their Guard status and different eligibility for retirement and other benefits. Air Force statements on the cost of the Guard ignores these lower life-time costs, and the proposed shifts of combat aircraft to the Active Component and elimination of missions in the Guard Component achieve significantly less savings than if the situation were reversed.

Secretary Panetta has stated the Guard and Reserve forces have proved their combat readiness and combat effectiveness over the past 10 years. These units have activated and served with distinction in Iraq and Afghanistan alongside Active Component forces, while also performing valuable civilian support and homeland defense functions under the direction of their state Guard commands. As decisions are made to reorient our force and draw down our current combat commitments, we must work to maintain the readiness and effectiveness of the Air Guard forces to perform all of these functions, while also capitalizing on the wealth of knowledge and experience within our Guard and Reserve units to maintain the total force.

I recognize that the funding constraints we currently face require difficult decisions to be made in prioritizing the roles and resources of all aspects of the Air Force. I am disappointed that faced with these challenges, the Air Force chose to target one of the most efficient aspects of their force in finding reductions. I encourage you to take a balanced approach as cuts are made to the total Air Force and carefully consider alternative proposals that support the Guard and Reserve like those made by the Council of Governors, rather than Air Force decisions that protect the parochial interests of the Active Component over the total force.

I urge you to protect the National Guard and support its long-term viability as part of the force. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,



Bruce Braley
Member of Congress