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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 23, 2015

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman McCain and Ranking Member Reed,

As the Committee begins its consideration of the Fiscal Year 2016 Defense Authorization Bill, we ask you to consider prioritizing funding to ensure we do not put our national security at increased risk by further reducing the size of our military's force structure. Our Nation's military forces must be sized, ready, and equipped to provide options for success to emerging challenges around the world.

We commend the Committee's hearings which reviewed the threats facing our national security, the extent to which our current national military strategy addresses those threats, and the impact of budget sequestration upon the strategy. The hearings repeatedly highlighted the following facts: our nation is facing, will continue to face, a security environment more challenging and more diverse than anything we have faced in our lifetimes; and if cuts to our military continue, it will not be able to meet current and future threat to our national security. We must ensure our military has the force structure, training and equipment it needs to meet its national security requirements.

One of the main bill payers for the reduced defense budgets have been cuts in force structure – cuts in our personnel – with no reduction in operations tempo or mission requirements. While each of the services have been impacted by these personnel cuts, this year our Army has been hit the hardest, followed by the Marine Corps. We have the potential to reverse that trend as Congress and its defense committees put together and pass its defense authorization and appropriations bills.

We ask you to prioritize additional funds to, at a minimum, maintain the current size of each of our services with the objective of increasing the size of each of our military components. We also ask you to consider including the following language in the Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Bill:

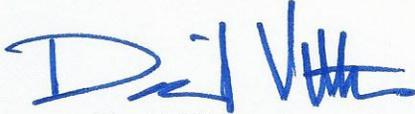
The Committee directs the Secretary of Defense to (1) ensure the force structure of our military is effectively sized and ready to protect the United States against the evolving threats, at home and abroad; (2) prioritize additional funding to, at a minimum, maintain the end strength of each of the services at the levels authorized in Section 401 of the Buck McKeon and Carl Levin National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (Public Law 113-291); (3) not make further reductions in force structure until any ongoing force structure studies or reports are complete; and (4) submit to Congress a

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certification that the Secretary has reviewed the National Commission on the Future of the Army's report and an assessment of each of the recommendations made by the Commission.

We believe these actions are imperative to ensure permanent force structure cuts do not jeopardize the capabilities and readiness of the Department of Defense over the long term. We thank you for your consideration and look forward to contributing to your efforts in this matter.

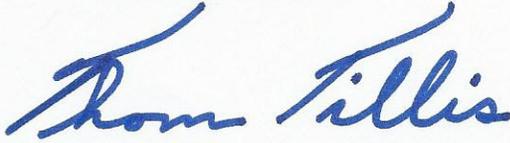
Sincerely,



David Vitter
United States Senate



James M. Inhofe
United States Senate



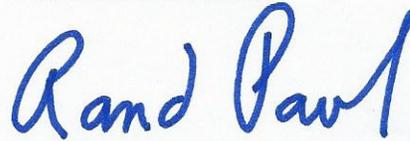
Thom Tillis
United States Senate



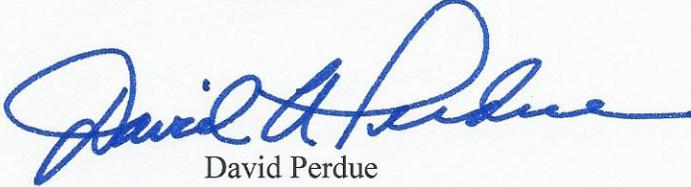
Bill Cassidy
United States Senate



Jerry Moran
United States Senate



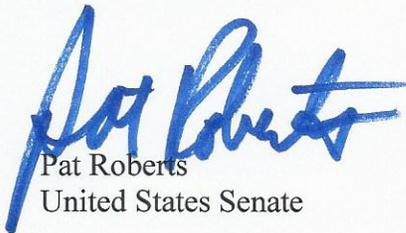
Rand Paul
United States Senate



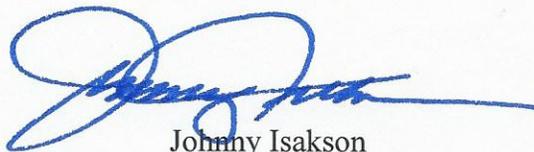
David Perdue
United States Senate



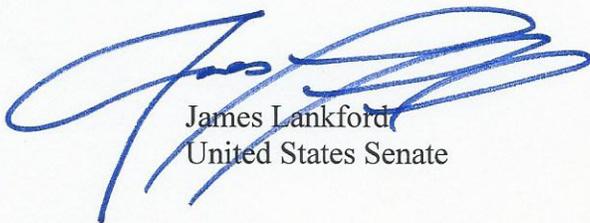
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Lisa Murkowski
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