

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 17, 2021

Chair Rosa L. DeLauro
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Kay Granger
House Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chair Betty McCollum
House Committee on Appropriations
Defense Subcommittee
H-405 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Ken Calvert
House Committee on Appropriations
Defense Subcommittee
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs DeLauro and McCollum and Ranking Members Granger and Calvert,

As you develop the Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations bills, we strongly urge you to reassess compensation for service members and set base pay to the equivalent of \$15.00 an hour or \$31,200.00 a year for new or current service members below this threshold. This pay floor is crucial for junior enlisted service members who are struggling to make ends meet.

The military is a compelling career path for many young Americans – it instills strong values, develops skills, creates robust personal networks, and provides excellent benefits. However, military pay increasingly lags behind other fields. As wages and salaries increase across many industries economy-wide, the military is now falling behind in the competition for quality recruits—in large part to the base pay issue. As the number of qualified and willing people to serve continues to diminish, the ability of our military to recruit top talent is starting to become a national security issue. Congress must address this pay issue now before it becomes a more significant area of concern.

Additionally, we have heard from countless junior enlisted service members (E-1 to E-4) and their families about the financial difficulties they are experiencing, from finding affordable housing to the too many families facing food insecurity. It is disappointing that service members often receive advice when they experience financial difficulties is to go to counseling instead of commanders and senior leadership recognizing that there is a problem. While there have been some encouraging steps to improve the quality of benefits and entitlements for the service members, base pay continues to lag.

Some will argue that Regular Military Compensation (RMC), the sum of base pay, basic allowance for housing (BAH), basic allowance for subsistence (BAS), and the federal income tax advantage from tax-free allowances, is the approximate amount of an equivalent salary in the civilian sector. However, not everyone receives full BAH or BAS, which results in many service members having wildly different discretionary incomes.

An E-1 with less than two years of service makes around \$1,785.00 per month or roughly \$21,420.00 a year pre-tax. It takes at least four years of service and achieving the rank of E-4 to make at least \$2,713.50 per month or approximately \$32,562.00 annualized pre-tax. Service

members will only achieve this if they decide to stay longer than the standard four-year contract. Furthermore, service members are frequently ordered to move, which causes an additional financial burden on families due to spousal unemployment and lack of licensure reciprocity among states. As a result, a service member cannot support a family of two, three, or even four on \$20,000.00 a year without depending on other forms of government assistance.

Additionally, it is time to recognize that service members often do not work the standard 40-hour work schedule and may sometimes have a 70-hour week. In deployments away from home, the hours can rise to at least a 12-hour shift, seven days a week. We need to recognize that and work to ensure that their compensation reflects those efforts.

Pay plays a vital role in retaining a ready force. One way to ensure service members and their families remain prepared is to receive the proper entitlement benefits. Service members and their families make an enormous sacrifice for our country, and inadequate compensation should not be one of these sacrifices.

We look forward to hearing from the Committee as you develop the FY23 appropriations bills and work to ensure that service members can provide for their families.

Sincerely,

/s/
Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress

/s/
André Carson
Member of Congress

/s/
Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

/s/
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

/s/
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

/s/
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

/s/
Kim Schrier, M. D.
Member of Congress

/s/
Don Young
Member of Congress

/s/
Scott DesJarlais
Member of Congress

/s/
Jared Golden
Member of Congress

/s/
Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress

/s/
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

/s/
Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

/s/
Marc Veasey
Member of Congress