

March 7, 2018

Senator Thad Cochran  
Chair, Defense Subcommittee  
Committee on Appropriation  
122 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Dick Durbin  
Ranking Member, Defense Subcommittee  
Committee on Appropriations  
122 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cochran and Senator Durbin,

As you continue your work on FY2019 appropriations for the Department of Defense (DoD), we are reaching out to you to highlight the importance of spending flexibility to military readiness.

The Bipartisan Policy Center's Task Force on Defense Personnel, co-chaired by Gen. Jim Jones, Sec. Leon Panetta, Sen. Jim Talent (R-MO), and Blue Star Families' CEO Kathy Roth-Douquet, was founded to address the strategic and personnel challenges currently facing the Department of Defense. The Task Force has been working to raise awareness of these challenges and has made concrete recommendations for meaningful reforms to both the Administration and Congress.

As you know, recent budget caps and numerous continuing resolutions have placed a significant strain on DoD. The men and women who volunteer to serve are the foundation of our military advantage. To preserve that advantage, the DoD must have spending flexibility that allows for necessary equipment upgrades and addresses the mismatch between the military's personnel and its equipment.

Specifically, we encourage you to consider exempting DoD from the "80/20" rule for FY2018 appropriations, and also, to allow the department to spend additional dollars appropriated for FY2018 in FY2019, since there are only five months remaining in this fiscal year. Further, as you craft your FY2019 bill, we implore you to pursue a strategy-based budget for the Department of Defense, as our Task Force on Defense Personnel recommended.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on this important issue and thank you again for your leadership.

Sincerely,



Steve Bell  
Senior Fellow  
Bipartisan Policy Center



Blaise Misztal  
Director, National Security Program  
Bipartisan Policy Center