



ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

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General Gordon R. Sullivan
United States Army (Ret.)
President

26 September 2011

President Barack H. Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of the 100,000 members of the Association of the United States Army, I write to express how deeply troubling it is to read proposals from your Office of Management and Budget that would place military health care and retirement benefits in the crosshairs of attempts to solve our nation's fiscal crisis.

As Commander-in-Chief, you are aware of how much we ask of our military personnel. At a time when we are fighting in Afghanistan, and threats remain around the world, our military personnel - less than one percent of our population who volunteer for decades of service and in essence write a blank check to the United States for an amount up to and including their life - should not have to wonder what benefits they will retain and what the retirement system will look like in the future. Perceived erosion of benefits, proposed or implemented, creates enormous morale, recruiting, and retention problems and leads to perceptions of betrayal of trust among those serving, those retired, and those who would join the all volunteer force in the future.

"Modernizing" the military retirement system and health care benefits to make them mirror more closely industry standards fails completely to account for the vast difference between civilian jobs and the military profession. Military retirement and health care benefits are not gifts - they have been earned through blood, sweat, repeated deployments, missed birthdays and anniversaries and sometimes loss of limbs or life. They are designed to provide a powerful incentive for top-quality people to serve full careers despite the hardships of such service for troops and their families.

The richest nation on earth can afford to continue the current retirement system and health care benefits for those few who defend it with a lifetime of service. Defending freedom is not free. The members of our association and I will continue to say just that.

I urge you to delete proposals to change military retirement and healthcare benefits from your deficit reduction plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gordon R. Sullivan".

GORDON R. SULLIVAN
General, USA Retired

GRS / WBL