

Join Bipartisan Letter to Supercommittee Urging Common Sense Defense Spending Reforms

Join Six Bipartisan Colleagues Calling for Common Sense Defense Spending Reforms from the “Supercommittee”

Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA) initiated this letter to the Super Committee that has bipartisan support (co-signers listed below. The letter calls for common sense defense spending reforms. Here is her note to other Members of Congress urging them to sign on to the letter. (The text of the letter to Supercommittee follows below.)

As the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction, or the ‘Supercommittee’ seeks out savings and works to end wasteful spending throughout the federal budget, it is critical that all federal agencies, including the Department of Defense, are subject to the same level of scrutiny and consideration. Significant savings can be realized without compromising our national security.

One of the main drivers of our deficit is military spending and it must be on the table for the committee to consider as they seek to reduce our deficit.

Please join six bipartisan colleagues in calling for the Supercommittee to consider savings opportunities throughout our defense spending.

Please note that the letter specifically rejects any cuts that would compromise the security of American troops in the field, as well as any cuts in services and increases in fees for our veterans and military retirees.

If you are interested in signing on or have any questions about the letter, please contact Teddy Miller in Congresswoman Lee’s office (teddy.miller@mail.house.gov); or Christopher Bognanno in Rep. Campbell’s office (christopher.bagnanno@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely

Barbara Lee (D-CA-09)

John Campbell (R-CA-48)

Barney Frank (D-MA-04)

Ron Paul (R-TX-14)

Gwen Moore (D-WI-04)

Rush Holt (D-NJ-12)

Dear Members of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction:

As you begin your work, we respectfully suggest reexamining our defense and security spending priorities as pathways to reducing our deficit and debt. You have been tasked with finding at least \$1.5 trillion in deficit reductions over a ten-year period by November 23 of this year. You have a unique opportunity to bring our defense spending in line with our legitimate national defense needs while getting our nation on the path to a balanced budget free of deficit. As former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates noted last year, paraphrasing President Dwight D. Eisenhower, “The United States should spend as much as necessary on national defense, but not one penny more.”

In the ten years since the 9/11 attacks, spending on defense and security has increased 96% and totaled almost \$8 trillion. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost \$1.36 trillion, and taken the lives of over six thousand men and women while leaving over thirty thousand wounded. In the same time frame, the base budget for the Pentagon has mushroomed to \$5.6 trillion.

As the 9/11 attacks demonstrated, the kinds of threats we face today are very different than those of previous eras. We live in an age where a few determined individuals with minimal financing, good planning and training, and a willingness to die can inflict billions of dollars in damage and kill thousands in a matter of hours. None of the billions of dollars of Cold War-era weaponry in our arsenal on September 11, 2001 stopped Al-Qaeda.

The continued reliance on Cold War weaponry and conventional tactics two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union makes little strategic or fiscal sense. The June 2010 report of the Sustainable Defense Task Force detailed proposals to reduce our nuclear stockpile substantially, realizing savings of over \$100 billion without compromising our national security.[\[1\]](#) The report proposed over \$960 billion in defense department savings over the next decade.

Significant savings could also be realized by auditing the Pentagon and requiring that it produce financial documents like any private sector business. Waste, fraud and abuse are endemic at the Pentagon, with the recent report from the General Accountability Office detailing hundreds of billions of dollars in duplicative programs with little oversight.[\[2\]](#) The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been characterized by poor planning, no-bid contracts, and lack of oversight leading to massive cost overruns. In August, the Commission on Wartime Contracting released its final report finding that an estimated \$30 and \$60 billion has been wasted during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This level of mismanagement is simply unacceptable.[\[3\]](#)

There are multiple reforms proposed that would save hundreds of billions of dollars over the next decade. The Bowles-Simpson commission outlined \$750 billion in suggested defense cuts in the next decade. Former Assistant Secretary of Defense Lawrence Korb has proposed \$1 trillion in cuts to the Pentagon over the next 10-12 years. These reductions in defense spending would come out of \$6.5 trillion in proposed spending between 2011 and 2020.

We are not urging reductions that in any way would cut resources and supplies necessary to protect American troops in the field. Similarly, while we are not opposed to an honest look at efforts at reforming the way that the Department of Defense provides health care and other services to personnel, we are opposed to cuts in services and increased fees for our veterans and military retirees.

Our economic recovery is vital to our strategic interests. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, has warned that ongoing debt accumulation is undermining our economic strength and threatening our national security. Taking serious steps to resolve our fiscal imbalance must include the Pentagon's budget, which should be subject to the same scrutiny as the rest of our discretionary budget as you look for savings. As Members on the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction, we urge you to think openly and act boldly to reduce our deficit and get our nation back on the right track. Bringing our defense spending in line with our legitimate security needs must be considered along with other measures to regain our economic footing.

BARBARA LEE

Member of Congress

JOHN CAMPBELL

Member of Congress

BARNEY FRANK

Member of Congress

RON PAUL

Member of Congress

GWEN MOORE

Member of Congress

RUSH HOLT

Member of Congress

[1] See "Debt, Deficits, and Defense: A Way Forward" at <http://www.comw.org/pda/fulltext/1006SDTFreport.pdf>

[2] See full March 1, 2011 GAO report "Opportunities to Reduce Potential Duplication in Government Programs, Save Tax Dollars, and Enhance Revenue" at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d11318sp.pdf>

[3] See full August 2011 Commission report "Transforming Wartime Contracting: Controlling Costs, reducing risks" at: http://www.wartimecontracting.gov/docs/CWC_FinalReport-lowres.pdf
