

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2013

The Honorable Charles T. Hagel
Secretary of Defense
100 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hagel,

We understand that our nation faces long-term fiscal challenges, and that all government departments and agencies need to tighten their belts and look for ways to cut costs. We are deeply opposed to sequestration and continue to support replacing it with real, responsible, and balanced deficit reduction. However, we also fear that the decision by the Department of Defense (DOD) to furlough the civilian workforce for 14 days this fiscal year could not only have a lasting negative impact on morale, readiness, national security, and safety, but will also have significant economic consequences in local communities and across the country.

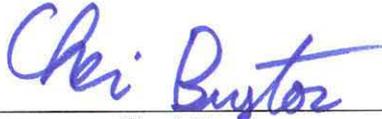
The recently passed *Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act*, which became law on March 26, 2013, provided additional Operations and Maintenance funds to provide greater flexibility to DOD. That funding allowed for the recently announced reduction in furloughs, which will provide a small measure of relief. However, we remain strongly concerned that any furloughs will put families at risk of financial hardship through no fault of their own and could be a big blow to local economies throughout the country, including our region in Illinois and Iowa. They could also jeopardize security clearances, family stability, ability to meet mission requirements, and worksite safety.

We also fear that furlough could cause long-term damage in attracting new talent into DOD. Reduction in pay, uncertainty, and hardship caused by furloughs could dissuade many well-qualified and talented individuals from pursuing DOD careers in the first place.

Again, while the recent announcement regarding the reduction in furlough days provides some measure of relief, we remain greatly concerned about the impact any furloughs will have. We urge you to make every effort and examine every avenue possible to avoid any furloughs for the remainder of FY13. We also ask for the budgetary analysis that explains why the currently planned furloughs are necessary. If the Department is unable to completely eliminate furloughs, we urge you communicate to Congress the requirements, flexibility, or resources that are needed to avoid furloughs and preserve military readiness.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of the people who are caught in the cross-hairs of our nation's fiscal battles as you move forward.

Sincerely,



Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress



Dave Loebsack
Member of Congress