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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6050

PETER K. LEVINE, STAFF DIRECTOR
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April 4, 2013

The Honorable Charles T. Hagel
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hagel:

It is our understanding the Department of Defense ("Department") has not yet taken action to restore Tuition Assistance for service members as required by Section 8129 of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2013, Public Law 113-6 (the "Continuing Resolution"). That law requires the Secretaries of the Military Departments to carry out tuition assistance for members of the Armed Forces during the remainder of the 2013 fiscal year, using amounts that shall not be less than the amount appropriated or otherwise available by the Continuing Resolution, minus an amount that is not more than the percentage of the reduction required to the Operation and Maintenance account for the Armed Force for Fiscal Year 2013 by the budget sequester required by section 251A of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control act of 1985.

As you know, tuition assistance is an important recruitment and retention tool, which also significantly contributes to our service members' morale. As an all-volunteer force, during a period of prolonged conflict, effective recruitment, retention and morale initiatives are essential to attracting and retaining professional personnel. Over sixty percent of our service members state the increased ability to pursue higher education was an important factor in deciding to join the military. More importantly, service members have taken their ambitions and turned them into reality. Specifically, in Fiscal Year 2012 alone, service members took 870,000 classes and earned 50,500 degrees, diplomas and certificates. This impressive number included: 33,300 Associate Degrees; 9,600 Bachelor Degrees; 5,800 Master Degrees and 1,800 Certificates or Licenses. These are truly extraordinary numbers, which are even more striking since these accomplishments were achieved during a service members' limited free time. Clearly, our service members' actions articulate the importance they place on these educational benefits. In addition, since our youngest veterans are currently facing high unemployment rates upon exiting the service, we believe this program is critical in assisting our service members during their transition into the civilian workforce.

We appreciate that the Department will take immediate action to support this requirement and to restore this valuable program. Therefore, we request that you update us on the Department's implementation plan, including a time frame describing when service members may expect Tuition Assistance to be restored.

Kay R. Hagan
United States Senator

Sincerely,

James M. Inhofe
United States Senator