

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 17, 2014

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Buck McKeon
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members,

As you know, the Bipartisan Budget Act, H. J. Res. 59, was signed into law by President Obama on December 29, 2013. I opposed this legislation for several reasons, but primarily because it violates our sacred promise to service members and their families by reducing their benefits.

This reduction in retirement pay would save \$6 billion cutting retirement compensation for disabled veterans, dependent survivors, and any other military retiree by reducing the Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA) 1% until they reach the age of 62. This compounding reduction would result in as much as a \$70,000 to \$120,000 dollar reduction per military family over the course of their retirement years. I see this as the equivalent of reaching into these individuals' retirement accounts and taking that money from them, which is unconscionable! And for what? To save \$6 billion over 10 years? \$6 billion is a lot of money, but in the context of this agreement it represents less than a .02% reduction in a \$3.3 trillion annual budget. This Bipartisan Budget Act singled out military families to make more sacrifice and did nothing to address the long term mandatory spending liabilities that are driving our debt.

The Bipartisan Budget Agreement was the product of Congress's failure to execute its core functions within the timeframe established by law, like funding the government through regular order. Artificial emergencies, and top-down control of the legislative process, forces members to vote on bills without adequate time for consideration, no input, and no opportunity for amendments. Since the passage of the Bipartisan Budget Act, it appears that members agree almost unanimously that it is a violation of our responsibility to our military. Many are seeking ways to undo this cut and fully restore military retirement pay.

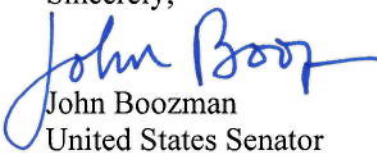
I am committed to working with you to fully reverse this irresponsible cut. Yesterday, the Senate passed H.R. 3547, the FY 2014 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, which will fund our government through the fiscal year. This omnibus also reversed the COLA cuts for medically

retired disabled veterans and those collecting survivor annuities, restoring approximately 17% of the cut to military retirement benefits. This is a step in the right direction, but it does not go far enough. I hope, we can now return to regular order in Congress and stop lurching from one artificial crisis to another.

Arkansans want Congress to fully restore military retiree benefits as soon as possible, and I am committed to raising this priority at every possible opportunity until justice is realized for these military families. This should be done at the earliest opportunity, and not left for any particular legislative vehicle while retirees are left with uncertainty in their financial future.

We must not tolerate the use of military families as political footballs to be kicked around the Hill as part of some political game. You have my commitment and cooperation in finding a responsible solution to this miscarriage of legislative priorities, and I look forward to working with you to see this through for our men and women who have served, and are serving, in uniform.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Boozman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John Boozman
United States Senator