

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 30, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Vice Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairman Mikulski:

As the Committee works to finalize Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 appropriations bills, we write to request a prohibition on further implementation of the Department of Defense (DoD)'s policy cutting per diem reimbursement rates during long-term travel which took effect on November 1, 2014. Such a prohibition in FY 2016 would allow Congress the opportunity to review and assess the Comptroller General's study regarding the cuts. The study, required by the FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act, will assess potential ramifications for military members and civilian employees and how such changes might discourage them from volunteering for mission essential travel. The report is expected to be delivered to Congress on June 1, 2016.

The DoD policy change included a 25 percent cut to reimbursement rates for expenses for travel in excess of 30 days and a 45 percent cut for travel longer than 180 days. These cuts were made without input from key stakeholders and without an independent assessment. We are concerned that such cuts may affect mission accomplishment and hurt morale. The cuts may also lead to military members and employees who fulfill critical mission requirements having to pay for expenses related to official travel out of pocket. This is particularly true of shipyard workers whose work keeps our nation safe. We should not force personnel to shoulder the burden of expenses related to basic necessities such as food, laundry, and transportation to and from their duty assignments while on official travel.

As members of the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, we are grateful for the opportunity to provide input as we work together to develop FY 2016 appropriations bills.

Sincerely,



BRIAN SCHATZ  
U.S. Senator



SUSAN M. COLLINS  
U.S. Senator