

July 07, 2015

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman McCain, Senator Reed, Chairman Thornberry and Representative Smith:

Congratulations on completing House and Senate consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016. These are critical bills to the security of our nation and the men and women who put their lives at risk to protect us around the globe. As you resolve differences in the House and Senate bills, governors urge you to retain the Senate bill's provisions authorizing Army National Guard (ARNG) end strength up to 345,000 (Sec. 416) and maintaining ARNG Apache helicopters (Sec. 1044 and Sec. 1045) until Congress has time to act on the recommendations of the National Commission on the Future of the Army (Commission).

The Army has proposed transferring all ARNG Apache helicopters to the active component and reducing ARNG end strength by 8,200 positions, including more than 1,700 full-time staff. Governors strongly oppose these proposals because they would return the ARNG to a strategic reserve and squander more than a decade of investments.

Furthermore, estimates by the Congressional Budget Office and the National Guard Bureau show that these proposals would not save money in FY 2016. The personnel reductions of 8,200 would affect an additional 15,000 positions across all states because of the need to shift positions, retrain staff and modify facilities to accommodate changes in force structure. Fully implementing the changes could take three to five years, creating instability and uncertainty for states and undermining the ARNG's ability to support emergency response missions.

Transferring the ARNG's Apaches to the active component would remove strategic depth from the Total Army by placing the entire Apache mission in a single component. As one of the nation's most cost-effective battle-tested forces, we believe making such a long-term irreversible change to meet short-term budget challenges is not in the best interests of the nation.

Congress responded to these concerns last year by limiting the transfer of Apaches and establishing an independent commission to review these proposals. We urge you to include the Senate bill's provisions in the final conference report and ensure sufficient time for Congress to act on the Commission's recommendations.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration of this important issue for the security of our states and the nation.

Sincerely,

Governor Rick Snyder
Chair
Homeland Security and Public Safety Cmte.

Governor Terry McAuliffe
Vice Chair
Homeland Security and Public Safety Cmte.

Governor Terry E. Branstad
Co-Chair
Council of Governors

Governor Dannel P. Malloy
Co-Chair
Council of Governors

CC: House and Senate Committees on Armed Services Members

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