

March 04, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan, Leader Pelosi, Leader McConnell and Leader Reid:

The nation's governors call on Congress to repeal Section 1053 of the fiscal year (FY) 2016 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which requires the conversion of certain Title 32 National Guard military technicians into non-uniformed Title 5 federal civilian employees. We are gravely concerned about how this provision will affect overall National Guard readiness and our ability to use the Guard to respond to emergencies.

In a January 7 letter to Armed Services Committee leadership, the Council of Governors (Council) co-chairs emphasized the changes required by Section 1053 represent a serious shift in authority from governors, whose constitutional duty is to protect our citizens and lead our National Guard. We are responsible for the safety and welfare of our citizens and are in the best position to manage our full-time military technicians.

For years governors have raised concerns about reductions to full-time National Guard personnel as cuts have been made to end strength in the face of ongoing budget challenges. These conversions would exacerbate two consecutive years of reductions in National Guard uniformed end strength and deny governors' access to thousands of dual-status technicians available for immediate military response to domestic emergencies. The Council discussed this issue at its recent plenary meeting on February 19, and senior leadership from the Department of Defense voiced equally grave concerns about the impact this conversion will have on National Guard readiness.

Governors appreciate the commitment to collaboration expressed by Senate Armed Services Committee leadership in their February 26 letter. We are committed to working with Congress and the Department of Defense on collective solutions to address technical adjustments, if any, that may be warranted in a military technician program. Unfortunately, the deadlines provided in the FY 2016 NDAA provide little time for our input into the process before implementation is set to begin in January 2017. Consequently, we call on Congress to repeal Section 1053 as part of this year's defense authorization bill.

Sincerely,

Governor Gary R. Herbert, Chair
Utah

Governor Terry McAuliffe, Vice Chair
Virginia

Governor Robert Bentley
Alabama

Governor Bill Walker
Alaska

Governor Douglas A. Ducey
Arizona

Governor Asa Hutchinson
Arkansas

Governor John Hickenlooper
Colorado

Governor Dannel P. Malloy
Connecticut

Governor Jack Markell
Delaware

Governor Nathan Deal
Georgia

Governor Eddie Calvo
Guam

Governor David Y. Ige
Hawaii

Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter
Idaho

Governor Bruce Rauner
Illinois

Governor Michael R. Pence
Indiana

Governor Terry E. Branstad
Iowa

Governor Sam Brownback
Kansas

Governor Matt Bevin
Kentucky

Governor John Bel Edwards
Louisiana

Governor Paul R. LePage
Maine

Governor Charles Baker
Massachusetts

Governor Rick Snyder
Michigan

Governor Mark Dayton
Minnesota

Governor Phil Bryant
Mississippi

Governor Jay Nixon
Missouri

Governor Steve Bullock
Montana

Governor Pete Ricketts
Nebraska

Governor Brian Sandoval
Nevada

Governor Maggie Hassan
New Hampshire

Governor Susana Martinez
New Mexico

Governor Pat McCrory
North Carolina

Governor Jack Dalrymple
North Dakota

Governor Mary Fallin
Oklahoma

Governor Kate Brown
Oregon

Governor Tom Wolf
Pennsylvania

Governor Alejandro J. García-Padilla
Puerto Rico

Governor Nikki R. Haley
South Carolina

Governor Dennis Daugaard
South Dakota

Governor Bill Haslam
Tennessee

Governor Greg Abbott
Texas

Governor Peter Shumlin
Vermont

Governor Jay Inslee
Washington

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin
West Virginia

Governor Scott Walker
Wisconsin

Governor Matthew H. Mead
Wyoming

CC:
The White House
Senate Armed Services Committee
House Armed Services Committee