November 14, 2014
The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Howard “Buck” McKeon
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Inhofe, Chairman McKeon and Ranking Member Smith:

Thank you for your efforts to preserve the Army National Guard’s combat aviation capability and to establish a National Commission on the Future of the Army (Commission). As you finalize the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 we encourage you to preserve these provisions and ensure the Army does not implement its plan to remove the National Guard’s Apache helicopters until completion of a thorough and independent review.

Despite continuing Congressional deliberations, as well as ongoing discussions through the Council of Governors with Department of Defense senior leaders, the Army is moving forward with its Aviation Restructure Initiative (ARI), which would transfer the Army National Guard’s Apache helicopters to the active service. If left unchecked, this unilateral preemptive action would undermine Congressional efforts to ensure an independent Commission can review the ARI’s effect on national security and the security of our states. We encourage you to request that the Army suspend implementation of the ARI until a Commission completes its review and ensure compliance by prohibiting the transfer of Apaches in the NDAA for FY 2015.

For more than a decade, the National Guard has demonstrated it is a cost-effective, operational force that is critical to our national security at home and abroad. The Army’s plans, however, suggest a pre-9/11 strategic reserve construct for the National Guard.

Today’s National Guard is a highly experienced and capable combat force and an essential state partner in responding to domestic emergencies. A return to a pre-9/11 role squanders the investment and value of the Guard and discredits its accomplishments at home and as an active combat force.

We respectfully request that the NDAA for FY 2015 maintain flexibility for the nation by preserving Army National Guard capabilities while an independent Commission reviews future Army aviation and force structure requirements.

Sincerely,
Governor Rick Snyder
Chair
Committee on Homeland Security & Public Safety
Governor Terry McAuliffe
Vice Chair
Committee on Homeland Security & Public Safety

Governor Terry E. Branstad
Co-Chair
Council of Governors

Governor Martin O’Malley
Co-Chair
Council of Governors

Cc:
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense

The Honorable Pete Visclosky
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense