‘DEVASTATING EFFECT’

The American Legion’s Opposition to a Weakened Military Budget

American Legion National Security Symposium
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NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA
May 9-10, 2012

Resolution No. 1: National Defense Funding

Origin: National Security Commission

Submitted by: National Security Commission

WHEREAS, One of The American Legion's founding principles is National Security; and

WHEREAS, The primary function of government is to ensure the security of its people and infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, While the Iraq War is over and the Afghanistan War is winding down, the United States faces an even more dangerous and unpredictable world than a decade ago; and

WHEREAS, As the world's sole superpower, a strong, adequately funded American military is essential for global peace and prosperity in the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, Spending on national security did not create the current budget crisis and further cuts to national defense will not solve it; and

WHEREAS, Leadership within the Department of Defense (DOD) has continually warned that significant reductions in defense spending pose serious risks to the future security of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Further cuts to the DOD budget will do irreversible and irreparable harm to the military capability of the U.S. to defend the nation; and

WHEREAS, The force structure of the United States Armed Forces has been in steady decline since the end of the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, A number of the most vital assets to the United States Armed Forces were procured prior to the end of the Cold War and are in desperate need of modernization; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. military has been at war for over 10 years causing equipment shortages and the extension of equipment useful life span to dangerous levels; and

WHEREAS, Redeploying National Guard and Reserve Component units, due to Department of Defense equipment shortages, left unit equipment behind in Iraq and Afghanistan, which has not been replaced for future mission requirements; and

WHEREAS, There has been virtually no research and development conducted for new generation weapons systems; and

WHEREAS, Defense spending, as a percentage of total federal spending, is approaching historic lows not seen since before World War II; and

WHEREAS, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta stated a $1 trillion cut in national defense could increase unemployment by one percent; and

WHEREAS, Even if this unemployment increased by only one-third of one percent, it would equate to approximately 500,000 jobs lost; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has already conducted program reviews which have cut $178 billion from its future budget requests; and

WHEREAS, Under the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25), the defense related budgets have been reduced by $465 billion over the next ten years; and

WHEREAS, If the Congress fails to reduce the deficit by $1.2 trillion, further defense cuts totaling nearly $500 billion would be enacted; and

WHEREAS, Without a proactive effort by Congress to protect the Department of Defense, their budget will be reduced by almost $1 trillion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 9 - 10, 2012, That The American Legion demand Congress and the Administration cease all efforts to reduce the defense budget from its current level.

The Price of Greatness

"More than any other people on Earth, we bear burdens and accept risks unprecedented in their size and their duration, not for ourselves alone but for all who wish to be free."

- President John F. Kennedy

A strong, adequately funded American military is essential for global peace and prosperity in the 21st century. As the world's sole superpower and leader of the free world, we must be able to deter aggression while maintaining the ability to fight and win wars when necessary. Our adversaries should have no doubt as to America's resolve and means to respond with overwhelming force to grave threats to our security.

The United States has answered the call of responsibility over the past several decades to defeat tyrants and dictators, liberate the oppressed, roll back communism, and destroy terrorist groups across the globe. Today, more than ever, the world looks to America's greatness for leadership in an increasingly dangerous and unstable world.

From Europe and the Middle East, to the Asia-Pacific and South America, vital U.S. interests are under the shadow of a growing list of national and trans-national threats. The U.S. military must be prepared for a full range of responses to any contingency.

As every veteran knows, the price of American greatness can be very high. The price of weakness, however, is much greater. Weakness invites aggression from those who believe that the United States is either unwilling or unprepared to fight. The American Legion's founders recognized this principle as "Peace through Preparedness."

The American Legion has always been a champion of a strong national defense. We understand that the primary responsibility of government is to maintain the security of its people. Will we be able to rise to meet the great security challenges of the new century? The answer depends on whether the men and women of our armed forces – present and future – have the tools and training they need to defend the nation.

This guide will help you understand why the defense buget is vital to our security and way of life, and what you can can do to protect it.

Defending the Defense Budget

"The actions we would need to take under sequestration could have a severe and irreversible impact on the Navy's future… If we end programs abruptly and some of these (shipbuilding) companies shut down, (we) will be hard pressed to reconstitute them. And each ship we don't build impacts the fleet for 20 to 50 years."

- Admiral Jonathan W. Greenert, Chief of Naval Operations

As part of last year's debt-limit deal, Congress and the administration placed ceilings to cap the defense budget and other forms of discretionary spending. In implementing these budgetary caps, the Obama administration proposed in its fiscal year 2013 budget to cut Pentagon spending by roughly $465 billion over the next decade.

However, because Congress failed to meet the Budget Control Act's deadline to reduce the long-term deficit by $1.2 trillion, the Pentagon now faces the worst-case scenario: current law requires additional across-the-board "sequestration" cuts to the defense budget totaling almost $500 billion over 10 years. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said that sequestration "…would have a devastating effect on not only national defense but I think on the rest of the country."

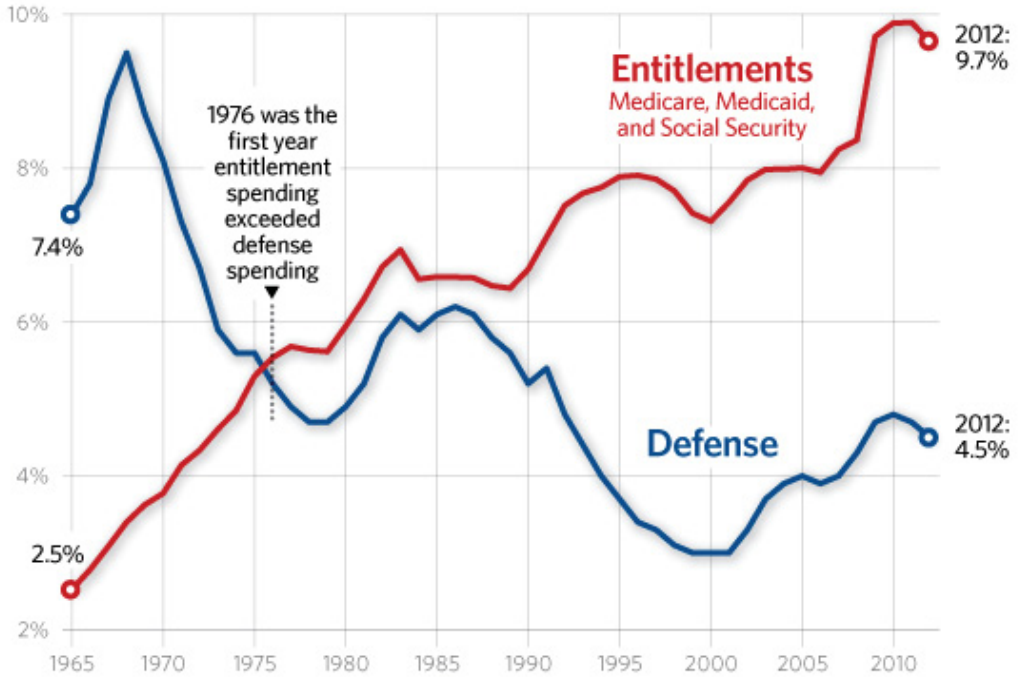
Today, with the United States facing mounting debt obligations and unprededented deficit projections, the defense budget has become an easy target. However, what drives our fiscal crisis is not defense expenditures but entitlement spending. It, along with interest on the debt, accounts for more than 65 percent of the federal budget; defense spending claims less than one fifth. As a percentage of gross domestic product, or GDP, defense spending is near historic lows.

Defense spending is not the problem.

Medicare and Other Entitlements Are Crowding Out Spending on Defense

Ever-increasing entitlement spending is putting pressure on key spending priorities, such as national defense, a core constitutional function of government. Defense spending has declined significantly over time, even when the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are included, as spending on the three major entitlements—Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—has more than tripled.

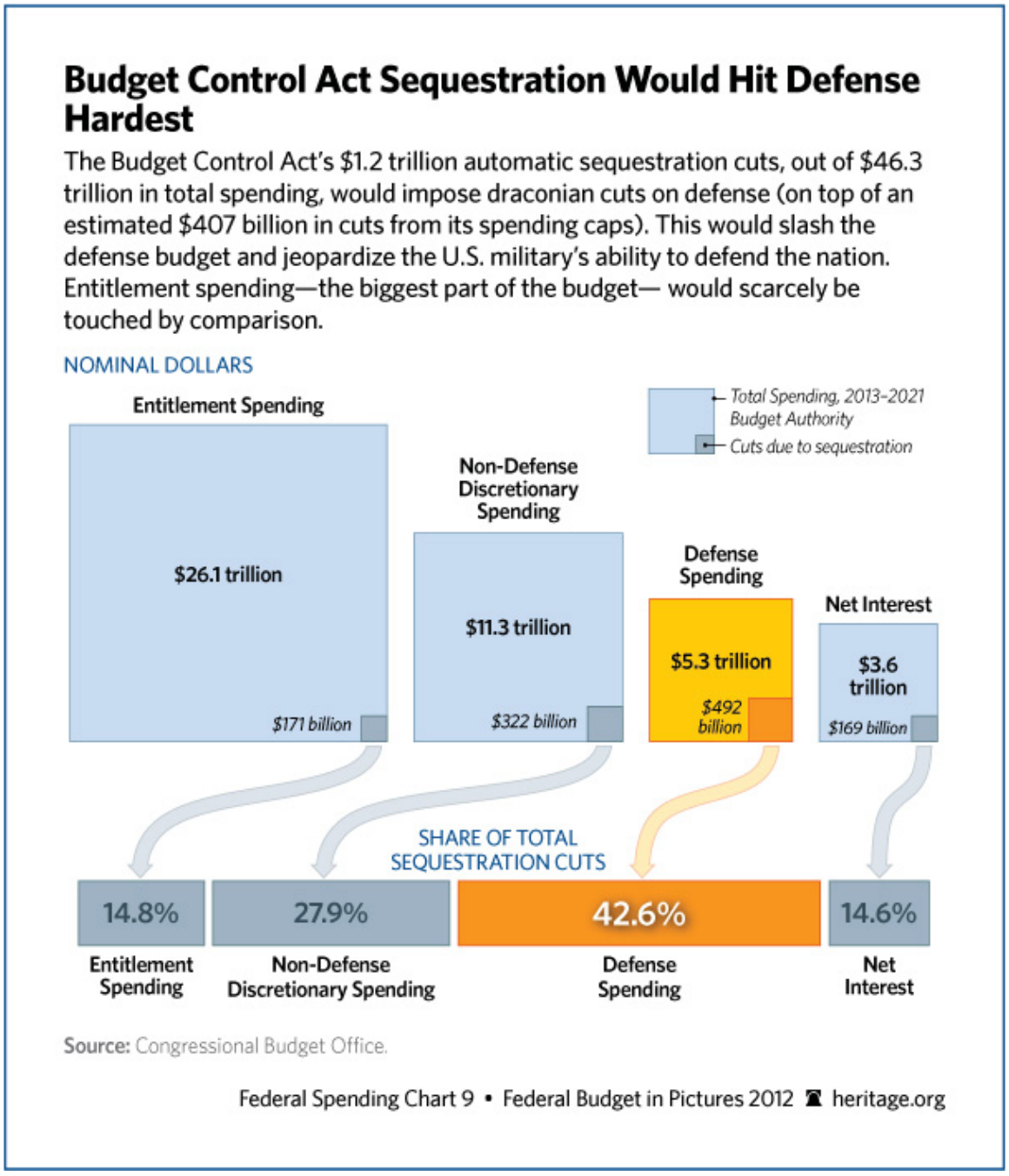
PERCENTAGE OF GDP



Note: 2012 figures estimated.

Source: Office of Management and Budget.

Current projected defense cuts of $465 billion combined with possible additional sequestered cuts of $500 billion over the next 10 years under the Budget Control Act (BCA) would dangerously weaken America's strategic position in the world and undermine our leadership among allies.



The Danger of Sequestration

> *"A hollow military has the organizational structure, but lacks the people, the training and the equipment it needs to actually get the job done. It's a ship without sailors. It's a brigade without bullets. It's an air wing without enough trained pilots. It's a paper tiger."*
>
> ***- Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta***

It seems our leaders have again forgotten the lessons so harshly taught throughout our history. Too often, policy makers have tried to reap a "peace dividend" with the effect of leaving the country with a gutted military dangerously unprepared for the next conflict. Following the Vietnam War, reductions left ground units undermanned and demoralized. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the defense budget was again slashed and troop levels drastically cut, leaving us unprepared to fight after 9/11.

Now, in the midst of the most dynamic and complex security environment in recent memory, sequestration would severely diminish America's global posture. An additional 100,000 soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen would be separated from service. Those reductions would lead to:

- The smallest ground force since 1940
- A fleet of fewer than 230 ships, the smallest level since 1915
- The smallest tactical fighter force in the history of the Air Force
- A tremendous burden placed on our already strained National Guard and Reserve components

Precisely at the moment when advanced military technology is spreading around the world, America would be forced to make severe cutbacks, eroding our technological advantage. The cuts would include:

- Termination of the Joint Strike Fighter, minimal upgrades to existing forces, and a wider "fighter gap"
- Termination of the new strategic bomber critical to America's future posture in the Asia-Pacific
- Delaying new submarines and cutting the existing fleet as nations like China expand anti-sub capabilities
- Shrinking America's aircraft carrier fleet, reducing power projection capability
- Termination of the littoral combat ship – essential to defeating anti-access threats from nations like Iran

The combination of cuts to force structure and advanced technology would lead to a hollow force increasingly uncertain of its ability to defend the nation.

America's Strategic Threats: Present and Future

"A vital element in keeping the peace is our military establishment. Our arms must be mighty, ready for instant action, so that no potential aggressor may be tempted to risk his own destruction."

- President Dwight D. Eisenhower

While the Iraq War is over and the Afghanistan War is winding down, the United States and our allies face a more dangerous and unstable world than we did a decade ago:

- **An increasingly powerful and assertive China intent on challenging our presence in the Asia-Pacific:** Since World War II, the United States has maintained a peaceful, stabilizing presence in the Asia-Pacific region. In cooperation with our friends and allies, the United States must also maintain a strong military presence in the Pacific to encourage economic prosperity and democratic freedom and to counter China's rapidly expanding military power.

- **An authoritarian, resurgent Russia:** Despite efforts by the United States to "reset" relations with Russia, its foreign policy remains largely anti-American. An American retreat from Europe and our NATO allies – especially former Soviet-bloc countries that aspire to Western democratic ideals – would no doubt create an opening for Russia to pursue an expansion of its historical sphere of influence in the region. Russia also continues to support undemocratic and anti-American regimes around the world, selling billions of dollars worth of advanced weaponry to dangerous regimes in Syria, Iran, Venezuela and elsewhere.

Hu Jintao reviews Russian troops.

- **A belligerent Iran that threatens its neighbors in the Middle East and has the ability to severely disrupt world energy supplies:** Iran remains the most powerful and destabilizing force in the Middle East. As it pursues its nuclear weapons program, Iran has continually threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most important oil transit choke-point. Additionally, Iran offers material support to terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, and has had a direct role in attacking U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- **An isolated and unpredictable North Korea:** The recent death of Kim Jong Il and the succession of his son, Kim Jong Un, have only exacerbated an already volatile situation on the Korean Peninsula. In conjunction with our allies in the region, the United States must be ready to defend South Korea from attack, but also respond to the potential humanitarian catastrophe that would result from the collapse of North Korea's regime.
- **A continuing global terror threat from al-Qaeda and its associates:** More than a decade after the attacks of 9/11, al-Qaeda and like-minded global terrorist groups continue to pose a grave threat to the national security of the United States. Today, our forces are deployed around the world fighting terrorists, from the Horn of Africa to Southeast Asia. They are committed to defeating those who are intent on destroying our democratic principles and way of life.
- **Energy Security and Upheavel in the Middle East:** From Egypt to Syria, the old order of the Middle East is being shaken to its core. As a recent Senate Foreign Relations Committee report states, "Home to more than half of the world's oil reserves and over a third of its natural gas, the stability of the Persian Gulf is critical to the global economy … However, the region faces a myriad of political and security challenges, from the Iranian nuclear program to the threat of terrorism to the political crisis in Bahrain."

Members of Iran's elite al-Quds Brigade

Keeping Faith With Our Veterans

The men and women in uniform today are all volunteers, hailing from every corner of this great nation. At any given time in the past decade, less than 1 percent of the American population has served on active military duty. These few have chosen to serve their country in a time of war and great sacrifice. As anyone who has answered the call knows, military service is unlike anything encountered in the civilian world.

Our military cannot absorb deeper cuts without breaking the promises Americans have made to those who have fought so hard for so long. At a time when our military and their families have made sacrifices for a decade, future cuts could force health care and retirement to be dramatically reduced. With fewer troops in the military, deployments will be longer and more frequent. At the same time, the threats to America will not be reduced. Broken promises and long deployments will cause many of our troops to vote with their feet and leave the force. Our all-volunteer military could become unsustainable.

As an example, the president's fiscal year 2013 defense health-care budget proposed to shift up to $51 billion in costs to retired (and some currently serving) military families over the next 10 years via dramatic and disproportional healthcare fee increases. Fortunately, both the Senate Armed Services Committee and the House of Representatives have so far rejected the most egregious of these proposed increases.

Like the House, the Senate Armed Services Committee rejected Pentagon proposals that would establish enrollment fees for TRICARE Standard and TRICARE for Life and increase TRICARE deductibles and the annual catastrophic cap. However, it does not prohibit the Defense Department from instituting proposed TRICARE pharmacy copayment changes, which do not require legislation.

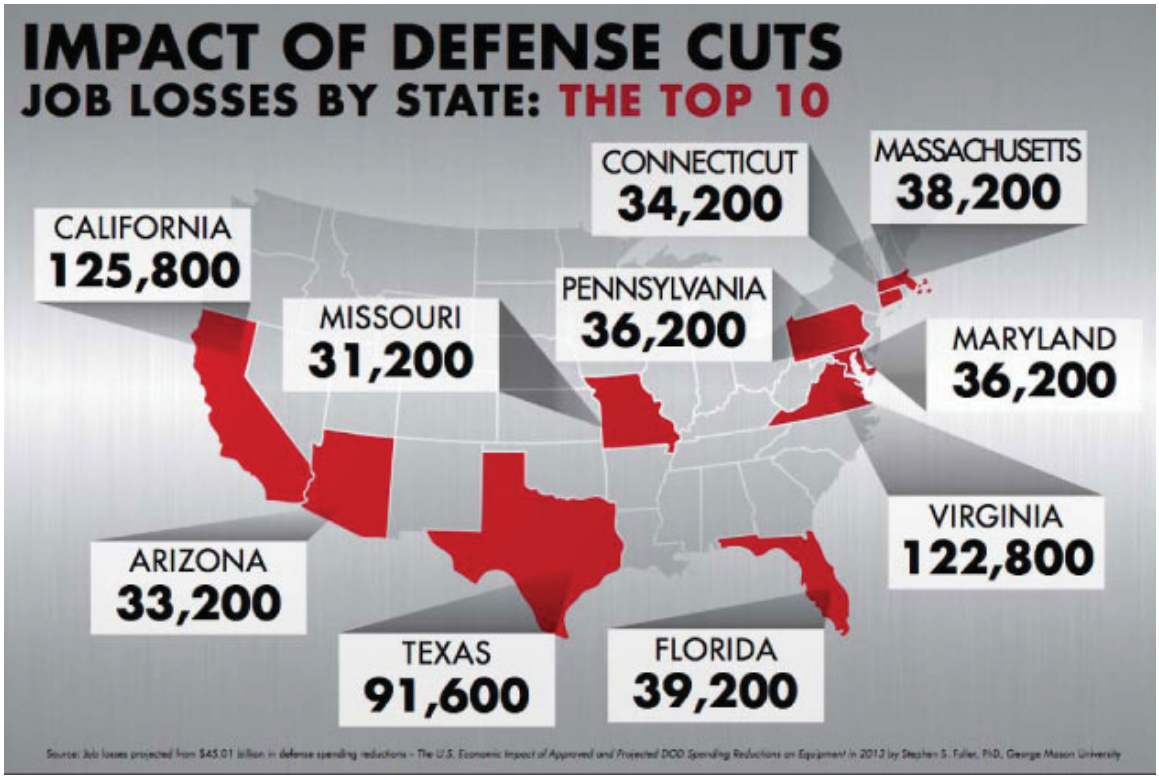
We must remain steadfast in protecting against efforts to balance the budget on the backs of our veterans. Their sacrifice has been too great to break our promise to those who served.

Preserving Our Defense Industrial Base

"I become more convinced than ever that as a nation, we can ill afford to lose our edge … Cut too deeply, and we will burn the very blanket of protection we've been charged to provide our fellow citizens. Cut too deeply now, and we will harm, perhaps irreparably, the industrial base from which we procure the materials of war."

- ***Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Michael Mullen***

Our ability to project military power anywhere in the world depends on the strength and viability of our defense industrial base. Tanks, ships, planes and other essential platforms require dedicated facilities staffed with skilled workers. Once these lines are shut down, it can take months or even years to get them up and running again. In a grave national emergency, this could mean the difference between victory and defeat.



In a recent letter to House Armed Services Committee Chairman Buck McKeon and Ranking Member Adam Smith, the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) reminded them that "much of the innovation essential for our economic development comes from important R&D in the defense and aerospace industries. The capabilities of U.S. defense and aerospace manufacturing cannot be taken for granted – once they are gone, they are extremely difficult or impossible to rebuild."

Even without sequestration, companies are cutting investments, shuttering operations and laying off workers because of the uncertainty emanating from Washington. Sequestration would risk severe and permanent damage to the defense industrial base as a competitive commercial enterprise, reliable provider of urgent wartime needs and as a national strategic asset.

- Massive layoffs will lead to a lost generation of skilled workers that will be impossible to replace
- Slashing R&D spending will stifle the innovation that keeps our military the most advanced in the world
- Consolidation by large contractors will reduce competition, crush small businesses, and increase costs

Americans have been loud and clear in demanding an end to our debt-driven financial crisis, and Congress has responded by putting everything on the table – including America's military. Already on track for the next 10 years are $465 billion in military budget cuts.

These cuts are tough and will force the military to shrink to force levels not seen in over a decade. Even deeper cuts to our military, which has already endured the largest share of cuts in government spending, would be grossly irresponsible.

What You Can Do

As an informed citizen who cares deeply about the security of America, your voice is vital to ensuring policy makers and politicians are held accountable for the security of the nation.

Contact Congress

Write, call, fax or even visit your Congressmen and Senators to express support for a strong national defense. Simply tell them this: NO MORE CUTS FROM DEFENSE.

Connect to this Web address for a great resource for getting in touch with your elected officials:
http://www.congress.org/congressorg/directory/congdir.tt

Write a Letter to the Editor

Writing a Letter to the Editor is a simple, yet powerful way to share your views on the dangers of drastic defense cuts.

Here are some tips to help get published:

1. State the argument you're rebutting or responding to, as briefly as possible, in the letter's introduction.
2. Stick to a single subject. Deal with one issue per letter.
3. Don't be shrill or abusive.
4. Your letter should be logically organized.
5. Use facts, figures and expert testimony whenever possible.
6. Proofread your letter carefully for errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
7. Try to view the letter from the reader's perspective. Will the arguments make sense to someone without a special background on this issue. Did you use technical terms not familiar to the average reader?
8. Always include your name, address, day-time phone number and signature.

More Resources on the Web

To learn more about the defense budget and military readiness visit:

www.defense.gov

www.legion.org

www.armedservices.house.gov

THE AMERICAN LEGION
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