

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 7, 2015

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
H-405, the Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Pete Visclosky
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
2256 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Lower, Chairman Frelinghuysen, & Ranking Member Visclosky:

As you draft final appropriations legislation for fiscal year 2016, we write to request that you include a provision in the final FY 2016 defense bill delaying cuts to National Guard personnel until the National Commission on the Future of the Army that Congress created has time to complete its study on the future size and structure of the Army.

As you may know, the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act calls for reducing overall Army National Guard strength from 350,000 troops to 342,000 troops. These cuts will have an adverse impact on many communities across our nation and are hasty given that Congress created a commission to study the appropriate size and role of the our Army, including the National Guard, which is expected to provide its expert recommendations in February 2016.

The proposed cuts to the Army National Guard will have a particularly adverse impact on Wisconsin. If enacted, the Chippewa Falls-based 724th Engineering Battalion headquarters and the 949th Engineer Detachment will be inactivated. The consequences of this will be catastrophic for our state. These facilities are the only Army National Guard engineering facilities in Wisconsin. Closing them will severely impede Wisconsin's ability to respond to natural disasters. It will also interfere with the ability for the Guard to recruit and retain dedicated and highly skilled individuals such as engineers. The disruption to our men and women in uniform and their families will be considerable as troops are forced to retrain, relocate, or cut their careers short.

The 2015 National Defense Authorization Act created the National Commission on the Future of the Army to undertake a comprehensive study of the structure of the total Army, including a review of the size of the Army, force mixture, missions, force generation policies, and how the structure required to fulfill mission requirements is consistent with available resources. We ask you to prevent the reduction of end strength levels for the Army National Guard until fiscal year 2017. This will allow time for this study to be completed, the recommendations to be digested by the Administration and Congress, and the results to be integrated into a comprehensive vision for our Army going forward, including the crucial role played by the National Guard.

At a time when the United States is involved in multiple conflicts overseas and when weather patterns are becoming increasingly violent and unpredictable, now is not the time to reduce the strength of the Army National Guard. I urge you to use the appropriations process to restore the cuts that have been proposed. Thank you for your consideration of this request.



Rep. Ron Kind

Sincerely,



Rep. Mark Pocan



Rep. Gwen Moore