

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 6, 2011

The Honorable Patty Murray  
448 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling  
129 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murray and Representative Hensarling:

As I speak with service members and veterans throughout Nevada, they have expressed a strong concern that military benefits will be cut by the Joint Deficit Reduction Committee. They, like me, do not support attempts to reduce veterans' benefits and reject the proposal outlined in the President's deficit reduction plan. Instead of meeting in secret with Washington special interests, this Committee should publicly commit to our nation's veterans.

Because your Committee has chosen to proceed in secret and not conduct open debate on the issues, I am taking the opportunity to write on behalf of my constituents to inform you of our grave concern with any recommendation to alter or reduce retirement benefits of career military members or increase to Tricare fees. While I recognize the very serious dangers posed by our nation's debt and share your commitment to address it, I join veterans across Nevada who do not believe that we should balance the budget on their backs. Doing so jeopardizes the futures of our service members, their families, as well as important recruitment and retention tools for our all-volunteer force.

By bringing military retirement compensation in line with civilian plans, the Committee is disregarding the incredible sacrifices and demands imposed on a career service member. The military retirement package is earned compensation and the brave men and women in our Armed Forces pay a very steep premium to earn them through many years of service. This vitally important recruitment and retention tool has been tailored to address the needs of our military personnel, which may not be met by a civilian retirement plan.

I share your commitment to addressing the federal debt and provide a long-term solution to our nation's fiscal problems. As the lead sponsor of the Budget Control Joint Committee Transparency Act (S.1501), I believe this plan needs to be crafted with the input of all Americans through an open process rather than a series of closed-door meetings. Unfortunately, recent news reports have shown special interests access and influence in the process. I find it deeply disturbing that a special interest handout could be offset by cutting veterans benefits.

Members of the Super Committee should publicly announce whether they are cutting vital services to our nation's veterans. I encourage you not to follow the Administration's recommendations and instead reaffirm our nation's commitment to our nation's military men and veterans. While seeking ways to meet our financial obligations, this body must first and foremost meet its obligation to the brave men and women who serve and have served in our Armed Forces.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter, and I look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,



U.S. Senator Dean Heller

cc:

Sen. Max Baucus

Rep. Xavier Becerra

Rep. Dave Camp

Rep. Jim Clyburn

Sen. John Kerry

Sen. Jon Kyl

Sen. Rob Portman

Sen. Pat Toomey

Rep. Fred Upton

Rep. Chris Van Hollen