Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 12, 2012

The Honorable Buck McKeon
Chairman
Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
Armed Services Committee
U.S. Senate
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Armed Services Committee
U.S. Senate
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

We write to you today to express our grave concern with the Air Force's Fiscal Year 2013 budget request.

From the earliest moments in our nation's history, the citizen militia has responded at a moment's notice to defend the nation. Well before we had a large standing army, citizen-soldiers provided the bulk of our armed forces when the nation went to war. Today, the National Guard continues the tradition of the minuteman, ready to serve both the Governor of their individual states for homeland defense, disaster recovery and other state missions as well as train and prepare for combat at the call of the President.

Since September 11th, the National Guard has stood shoulder to shoulder with their active duty counterparts, which enabled the country to prosecute two wars simultaneously. They have served with distinction in Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, as well as Operation Odyssey Dawn.

Without question, this nation would not have been able to maintain the high operational tempo required to support those operations without the infusion of manpower and assets from Guard units around the nation. In countless instances, men and women of the Guard willingly volunteered to take the fight to the enemy – and many have made the ultimate sacrifice.

It is no secret that the nation's fiscal situation is dire; cost efficiencies must be found and waste and duplication must be reduced in every department and program across the Department of Defense. We are under no illusion that tough choices will have to be made; however, we find it troubling that the Air National Guard which currently represents 35% of our air capability while using only 6% of the budget is being asked to absorb 59% of the total aircraft cuts in the effort to reduce costs.

If the proposed budget is truly about saving tax-payer dollars, it seems incomprehensible that the overwhelming majority of airpower reductions should come from the Air National Guard when they are more cost effective than their active duty counterparts. At a minimum, we believe that a delay in any decision be made until the studies currently underway are completed to fully understand the delicate balance between cost savings and the preservation of combat capabilities.

We are cognizant of the need for shared sacrifice across the nation and among the active duty, Guard and reserve components of the Air Force, but we fully believe that such sacrifice be shared proportionally and after a sober assessment of the cost implications. The impact on the Air National Guard generally across this country and to Michigan's National Guard specifically is not "shared sacrifice;" rather Michigan takes a disproportionate cut and stands to lose over 800 jobs statewide according to the projections from the Air Force. Air Guard units in many other states are also affected in a way which severely diminish their capabilities. This is why 49 Governors and every Adjutant General from each of the 54 states and territories have stood up against these cuts and asked us to chart a different course.

We respectfully ask you to delay in any decision until the appropriate analysis can be completed.

Sincerely,

Candice S. Miller
Member of Congress

Tim Walberg
Member of Congress

Dan Benishek
Member of Congress

John D. Dingell
Member of Congress

John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress

Dale E. Kildee
Member of Congress

Sander M. Levin
Member of Congress

Fred Upton
Member of Congress

Dave Camp
Member of Congress

Mike Rogers
Member of Congress

Thaddeus McCotter
Member of Congress

Gary Peters
Member of Congress

Hansen Clarke
Member of Congress

Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress

Justin Amash
Member of Congress

cc: Leon Panetta, Secretary of Defense