

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

October 25, 2022

**VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY**

The Honorable Lloyd Austin  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1300 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1300

Dear Secretary Austin:

We write to ask that the Department of Defense (DoD) expeditiously issue its report and certification to Congress required by the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) regarding equal payment of incentive pays to members of the reserve components when compared to those issued to active duty servicemembers. Under the law, Congress required the DoD to issue this report and certification by September 30, 2022, and its delay is preventing the payment of incentive pays that reserve component servicemembers have earned for their critical skills, harming retention and hampering recruiting.

To attract talent and retain critical skills, Congress authorizes DoD to provide servicemembers with a variety of incentive pays. Currently, DoD uses 18 incentive pays to influence recruiting and retention of individuals with specific skill sets and qualifications. Many of these incentive pays require specialized training or involve duties with increased risk to our servicemembers. Servicemembers must meet training and duty requirements to receive incentive pays. These requirements are the same for active duty servicemembers and those in the reserve components. However, current DoD policy caps the amount of pay National Guard and Reserve servicemembers receive to a fraction of what the active component receives, despite performing the same duties and meeting the same skill requirements.

To rectify this discrepancy, Congress included Section 602 in the FY 2022 NDAA that stipulates DoD must provide incentive pays to reserve component servicemembers in the same amount it gives active duty servicemembers. Before implementing this section, the law also requires DoD to submit to Congress a report on its plan for providing equal incentive pays as well as a certification that such a change will not negatively affect the force structure of any military component. DoD's delay in providing this report and certification on time prevents the payment of these incentive pays that are crucial for the retention of critical skills.

Incentive pays are vital for retaining qualified talent and are less expensive than training new servicemembers to replace those who would otherwise decide to leave. For example, a 2019 RAND report concluded that increased aviation incentive pays would improve pilot retention and

reduce overall costs to DoD. The study estimated that the training cost for a basic qualified fighter pilot ranges from \$5.6 million for an F-16 pilot to \$10.9 million for an F-22 pilot, both of which are airframes in our Air Force reserve components. Providing incentive pays equal to active duty servicemembers could increase retention of pilots and other crucial skills in the reserve components at a cost much lower than training new members. Additionally, the payments incentivize new members to fill existing vacancies in an intensely challenging recruiting environment.

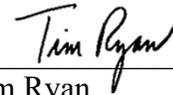
Our reserve component servicemembers are vital members of our total force. In addition to providing strategic depth to our Armed Forces, they also serve as an operational reserve that routinely deploys in support of combatant commanders abroad. Crucially, they have proven vital for responding to domestic missions here at home. As the foreign and domestic operations tempo remains high for reserve component servicemembers, we must provide them with the benefits they have earned. Since reserve component servicemembers who receive incentive pay are already maintaining the same skills as their counterparts in the active component, they deserve to receive the same amount of incentive pay. Failure to provide this will only exacerbate the military's manning crisis as current reserve component servicemembers weigh whether to continue dedicating their time to maintaining their critical military skills despite this pay disparity or focus instead on opportunities in the civilian labor market of which they are already members. We ask that you do right by our reserve component servicemembers and move expeditiously to provide them with the full incentive pays they have earned.

Sincerely,



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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



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Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress



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Susan Collins  
United States Senator



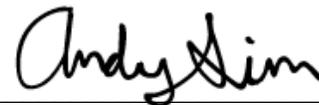
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Trent Kelly  
Member of Congress



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Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



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Andy Kim  
Member of Congress