



THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

March 16, 2011

“ Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.”

--President Dwight David Eisenhower, 1953

Dear Senators and Representatives:

We, the undersigned members of the Maryland General Assembly, urge you to do whatever you can to move tens of billions of dollars from the bloated Pentagon budget into the urgent national project of rebuilding our crumbling physical and social infrastructure at home.

The economic downturn has drained our state and local treasuries to dangerously low levels and is inflicting immense suffering on our people. In the context of this crisis, the current unprecedented level of military spending constitutes a shocking misallocation of national resources. We ask you as our colleagues and our leaders in Washington to press for a dramatic shift in federal budget priorities.

We can no longer afford the overgrown “military-industrial complex” which is dominating our politics and economics to an extent that would horrify President Eisenhower, the great general who coined the term when he warned 50 years ago this week in his Farewell Address that, “In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.”

As we struggle to balance Maryland’s budget and meet the sharp rise in human needs caused by the housing meltdown and stubborn unemployment, we ask you to focus on the following facts:

- The people of Maryland will pay (or go into further debt for) for more than \$14.3 billion in 2011 as our contribution to the military budget<sup>i</sup>, an amount matching our entire annual State budget for everything, including k-12 education, higher education, health care, public safety and environmental protection;
- The base Pentagon budget is expected to more than double (in constant dollars) between 1998 and this year when it will hit more than \$708 billion, a figure that does not include an additional \$25 billion for defense spending outside the Pentagon, such as spending on nuclear weapons in the Department of Energy<sup>ii</sup>. Amazingly, only 17% of this fantastic increase in the military budget is attributable to the costs of the trillion-dollar wars in Iraq and Afghanistan;

- Military expenditures can be reduced by at least one trillion dollars over the next decade, with no reduction in security to Americans and no harm to American troops, as shown in a bipartisan 2010 report commissioned by Rep. Barney Frank (between 1998 and 2011 D-MA) and Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX)<sup>iii</sup>. These reductions can thus take place without diminishing in any way the nation's unwavering and unified support for our brave servicemen and women in the field of combat, a support that we are proud to emphatically restate.

While we are spending more on the military establishment, giant defense contractors and Beltway Bandits than at any time since World War II, including during the Korean, Vietnam and Cold wars, we are badly neglecting basic needs at home:

- The employment situation remains desperate in many communities. Job creation is essential and urgent, in both the private and public sectors, and yet local and state governments are being forced to cut jobs and furlough workers, exacerbating unemployment ;
- Funds are desperately needed for rebuilding our eroding infrastructure, including roads, bridges, water systems, mass transportation and environmental protection, and for developing new technologies for a sustainable future. These are public imperatives that will create jobs as well as restore economic vitality to our suffering communities;
- Big cuts to school budgets all over America undermine the quality of our schools and compromise the education of our children. Maryland needs \$3.8 billion just to address deteriorating school facilities, a staggering amount of money that is a mere pittance compared to the \$770 billion we have spent on the Iraq War alone since it began;<sup>iv</sup>
- A dramatic increase in poverty in the U.S. has accelerated the need for emergency food and shelter services. In Maryland, 133,000 children live in poverty each day<sup>v</sup>;
- The physical and mental health needs of veterans are badly underfunded, and America has a huge unbudgeted liability for taking care of our veterans;

For all these reasons, we ask you to introduce legislation in Congress making major reductions in the Pentagon budget, amounting to at least 25% over the next five years as recommended by Representatives Frank and Paul. Savings can be invested in the crying social needs of the nation.

This should be a matter of bipartisan consensus, national urgency and Congressional mobilization. Please remember President Eisenhower.

We stand ready to help.

Very truly yours,



Senator Jamie Raskin, D20



Delegate Sheila Hixson, D20

<sup>i</sup> National Priorities Project, Out-of-Balance, <http://nationalpriorities.org/media/uploads/webinars/outofbalance-statebystate.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Project on Defense Alternatives, *Trillions to Burn*, <http://www.comw.org/pda/1002BudgetSurge.html>

<sup>iii</sup> *Debts, Deficits and Defense: A Way Forward*, Report of the Sustainable Defense Task Force, June 11, 2010, <http://www.comw.org/pda/fulltext/1006SDTFreport.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> National Priorities Project, Out-of-Balance, <http://nationalpriorities.org/media/uploads/webinars/outofbalance-statebystate.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> National Priorities Project, Out-of-Balance, <http://nationalpriorities.org/media/uploads/webinars/outofbalance-statebystate.pdf>