

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 13, 2012

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Building
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Building
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Levin and Ranking Member McCain, Chairman McKeon and Ranking Member Smith,

As Conferees to the National Defense Authorization Act we write in support of the tremendous effort that was made on the part of the U.S. House of Representatives to maintain the readiness of the Air National Guard in the FY 2013 National Defense Authorization Act. Language included in House passed version of H.R. 4310 maintains funding for personnel and much needed transport capabilities that will keep the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve at a heightened state of readiness. The prohibition of retirement or realignment of aircraft will help to maintain the current capabilities of the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve allowing them to contribute significantly to the national security of the United States and provide much needed response capability to the people of New York State and many other states.

We encourage you to maintain the language included in the House version of the bill that would limit funds from being made available for the retirement or realignment specifically of C-130 aircraft. We believe it is necessary to evaluate the size and scope of the current Air Force cargo fleet in consultation with local communities and the Governors of their prospective states.

We recently witnessed the destructive power of hurricane Sandy which destroyed thousands of homes and left millions stranded without supplies, electricity, or shelter. The men and women of the 107th Airlift Wing at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve station stood ready to aid in the recovery effort and support their fellow New Yorkers. 2,290 Airmen were deployed by Governor Cuomo and C-130 aircraft carried personnel and supplies within hours to affected areas of New York and New Jersey. In 2011 C-130 aircraft from Western New York flew over 1,500 missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

These critical assets continue to be an essential part of our national security infrastructure guaranteeing quick responses to urgent needs. In many communities the Air National Guard is a crucial partner helping to provide jobs, homes, and economic security for thousands of Department of Defense personnel and their families.

We encourage you to prioritize the Air National Guard cargo fleet moving forward including fully funding the National Guard personnel that crew these aircraft and delay the retirement of C-130 aircraft until realistic plans and evaluations have been done to determine the national security impact and the challenges to states of reducing the current fleet.

Sincerely,



BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress



LOUISE M. SLAUGHTER
Member of Congress



KATHLEEN HOCHUL
Member of Congress