NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION

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Executive Director

February 26, 2012

The Honorable Leon Panetta
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Panetta:

We, the nation's governors, strongly oppose the disproportionate cuts facing the Air National Guard as part of the U.S. Air Force's fiscal 2013 budget request.

Over the past decade our National Guard has evolved into a cost-effective operational force that is critical to our national security and our ability to respond to domestic emergencies. The Air Guard provides 35 percent of the U.S. Air Force's capability for six percent of the budget. It performs a variety of domestic missions, including transporting vital personnel, equipment and supplies during emergencies and assisting in daily drug interdiction operations.

As Commanders-in-Chief, we appreciate the need to reorganize, restructure and modernize the military to meet new threats and economic realities. We also understand the need for cost-effective means to achieve these goals. Given these realities, we must oppose the proposal that the Air National Guard absorb 59 percent of the total aircraft budget reductions and approximately six times the per capita personnel reductions.

Governors are extremely proud of the role that the National Guard plays in protecting this nation and its citizens. The National Guard is a highly experienced and capable force and an essential state partner in responding to domestic disasters and emergencies. We respectfully request that the Department of Defense reconsider any proposed Air Guard force or equipment reductions and that you work with governors to fashion solutions that best serve the interests of this nation.

Sincerely,

Dave Heineman Jack Markell

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Edward G. Brown | Peter Shumlin

Harry Herbert | [illegible]

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Mary Fallin | [illegible]

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Paul R. LePage | [illegible]

Mark Dayton

Jack Dalrymple

Earl Ray Tomblin

Chris Gregoire

Terry Branstad

Dennis Daugaard

Pat Quinn

Neil Abercrombie

Nathan Deal

Bill Harslam

Phil Bryant

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