

COMMITTEES:

APPROPRIATIONS

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION

ENVIRONMENT AND
PUBLIC WORKS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 3, 2010

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Gates:

I am writing to express concern regarding outreach to members of our Armed Forces whose service has been extended by the military's stop loss policy since 2001. These individuals must be informed of their right to retroactive special payments for their service.

I authored legislation in the 110th Congress to recognize the brave men and women affected by the stop loss policy since 2001 by providing them with compensation. Similar legislation ultimately was signed into law on June 24, 2009 as part of the Fiscal Year 2009 Supplemental Appropriations Act. This compensation is an important step in giving these service members the recognition and gratitude they deserve for their extraordinary service.

However, I am concerned that more than 100,000 service members who qualify for these payments may never receive them. As you know, on October 21, 2010 the Department of Defense's legal authority to provide retroactive special payments to service members impacted by stop loss will expire. Of the 145,000 service members, veterans, and beneficiaries entitled to receive retroactive stop loss payments, the Department of Defense has stated that only 25,000 have received payments. I recognize that the Department of Defense has faced many challenges in reaching the eligible population and educating them on the application process, but the Department should use every available outlet to locate these service members, veterans, and beneficiaries and inform them of their eligibility.

I respectfully request specific information on the Department's efforts to reach these individuals. This should include detailed information on steps the Department has taken to proactively reach those eligible, including advertisements, direct mailings, and outreach to veterans' organizations. I am also requesting information on the Department's coordination with the Department of Veterans Affairs to reach individuals under its purview.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

