

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 28, 2016

The Honorable Ashton B. Carter  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1400 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Carter:

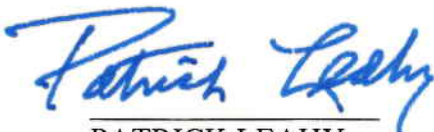
We write with deep concern about recent reports about the Department's recoupment of bonuses and education benefits improperly awarded to Soldiers through no fault of their own during the height of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. We agree that those who dedicate themselves to service deserve our gratitude, respect, and full support, and we appreciate your decision to immediately suspend collection of reimbursement and establish a process to review the matter fully.

Current reports allege that most, if not all, of the rank and file members of the California Guard simply accepted a bonus which they should not have been offered. If this is the case, then we believe these debts should be forgiven. For those who have already undertaken the burden to repay them, the Department should return the amount recouped, along with appropriate compensation. We ask that you provide in a timely manner any request for authorities needed from Congress to make this course of action possible. If, however, you determine that this is not the case, we ask to be included in any report of your findings. Additionally, we ask that you determine whether Soldiers in other states and other components have been impacted.

Finally we agree with you that the men and women who serve our country are our nation's most valuable asset. Please provide a summary of the actions the Department has taken to reemphasize the importance of running a process for rectification that is easy to navigate, as well as any recommendations for changes to authorities to meet that goal should you feel you need them.

Thank you for the prompt attention and focus on our Soldiers that you have shown so far to solve this problem.

Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY  
United States Senator



DIANNE FEINSTEIN  
United States Senator

BARBARA BOXER  
United States Senator

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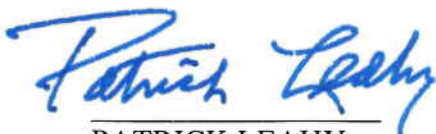
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Al Franken

Amy Klobuchar

Mazie Hirono

Tom Carper

Richard Blumenthal

Debbie Stabenow

Jay Coakley

Mitt F. Romney

Mark R. Warner

Chris Murphy

Edward J. Markey

J. A. B.

Bob Carey, Jr.

Ray Bend