

LETTER TO SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, THE HONORABLE ROBERT F. HALE

HON. JOE COURTNEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 31, 2013

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I insert this letter from myself to Under Secretary of Defense, the Honorable Robert F. Hale.

Hon. ROBERT F. HALE,
Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), Pentagon, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY HALE: Thank you for providing me and members of the Readiness Subcommittee a briefing on the implementation of civilian furloughs at the Department of Defense. I appreciate your first-hand view of the policy and its impacts on our defense civilian workforce and our military readiness, and I benefitted from your candid remarks about the challenges that sequestration continues to present to the department.

While I continue to believe that the best way to address furloughs and other impacts to our military readiness is for Congress to pass a comprehensive and balanced plan to end sequestration, I also believe that the department must continue to evaluate all options available to it in reducing or eliminating furloughs this year. During our briefing you indicated that the department was evaluating whether additional reductions in furlough days can be made. It is my hope that the department will finish that analysis and make a positive public announcement on that matter as quickly as possible in order to provide furloughed employees the greatest possible certainty as to their financial outlook for the rest of the year.

Additionally, as I and several of my colleagues mentioned in our session, there are a number of specific aspects of the current furlough policy that continue to frustrate those individuals facing loss of pay through no fault of their own. For example, I believe that the individual military services and agencies can be provided with greater flexibility to pay down or eliminate furloughs under their purview. Additionally, further consideration must be given to the status of dual status technicians and those whose work is funded through the defense working capital funds—both workforces are critical to the day-to-day needs of our military, and I continue to believe that exceptions must be made for these personnel.

Just this past Saturday, I attended a welcome home event for the 1109th TASMG of the Connecticut National Guard, who spent the last year in Afghanistan providing critical maintenance for our helicopter fleet. Their joy at being home with family was undiminished with the reality that nearly a third of the 100 returning members are dual status technicians and therefore hit by furlough. After serving in a war zone away from family, it was a bitter pill for these patriots to lose 20 percent of their pay almost immediately upon return.

As I also mentioned in our briefing, the department must better quantify and communicate the cuts that have already been made in attempting to avoid furloughs. When I recently met with furloughed personnel at Naval Submarine Base New London, I received many questions about whether the department made any attempts to cut back on contracting for services, returning outsourced work to federal employees and other potential ways to find the savings necessary to reduce or eliminate furloughs. It is my hope that you will provide members of this committee, as well as the workforce at

large, with additional information on the extent to which the department has, or plans, to cut in other areas to limit the reach of furloughs.

Finally, let me thank you for your positive words about the work that our DOD civilians do each and every day in support of the defense of our nation. As you shared in our meeting, one of the most disappointing impacts of the furloughs has been giving our defense civilians the impression that they are not important to or valued by the department, by Congress and by our fellow Americans. That these furloughs, and the greater budget uncertainty at large, is causing long-serving and hard working civilian professionals to question whether they want to stay at the defense department is one of the most insidious impacts of this budget impasse. That is why I hope you and Secretary Hagel will continue to do all you can to reduce or eliminate furloughs, revisit specific unique exemptions, and provide more detailed information about the steps you have, and will continue to take, to limit furloughs through reductions in areas like service contracting and reversing outsourcing decisions.

Thank you, again, for taking the time to meet with me and my colleagues on the Readiness Subcommittee, and I sincerely thank you for your service to our country in these challenging times.

Sincerely,

JOE COURTNEY,
Member of Congress.

HONORING THE DEDICATED SERVICE OF HEDY RATNER AND CAROL DOUGAL

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 31, 2013

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Hedy Ratner and Carol Dougal, the founders of Women's Business Development Center (WBDC), for their exemplary leadership in supporting women's entrepreneurship. As Hedy and Carol step down from their role as co-presidents of the WBDC, let us recognize the work that these two remarkable women have done for more than 25 years to empower other women to start, improve and expand their small businesses.

In 1986, Hedy Ratner and Carol Dougal created the Women's Business Development Center to address the lack of support for women in the business world. Since then, Hedy and Carol have worked tirelessly to accelerate the growth of women-owned businesses and microenterprise ownership, increase the economic impact of women business owners on families and communities, build awareness of business ownership as a path to economic self-sufficiency, and help stimulate policy and system changes to empower women in the economy. Today, the positive impact of the WBDC is clear, and the Center continues to be a leader in expanding opportunities for women.

Over the years, the WBDC has helped more than 66,000 women in the greater Chicago area in their entrepreneurial efforts. Its success has spurred the creation of 14 other centers in 6 states. The oldest and largest women's business assistance center in the country, the WBDC is constantly developing and implementing new approaches to help potential and

current women business owners. The Center and its outstanding staff give women the tools, the needed support and the confidence to know that they can become successful entrepreneurs.

Hedy and Carol are recognized leaders who have advised business groups and public officials at all levels about ways to help women improve their families' well-being and our nation by creating new business opportunities. I am one of many who have been fortunate enough to receive their advice on ways to improve federal contracting and lending policies and to learn about the barriers that must be torn down so that more women can enter the realm of business ownership.

I congratulate Hedy and Carol on the extraordinary contributions they have made through the Women's Business Development Center. Although they are leaving their posts as co-presidents of WBDC, I know that they will remain leaders in advocating for women-owned businesses in Chicago and nationwide. I look forward to watching their next steps toward helping women business owners successfully achieve economic independence through entrepreneurship.

RELEASE OF THE DREAM 9

HON. LUIS V. GUTIÉRREZ

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 31, 2013

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, I submit this letter, from Rep. JARED POLIS of Colorado and myself to the President of the United States asking for the release of the DREAM 9 held in detention in Arizona.

JULY 25, 2013.

President BARACK OBAMA,

The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR PRESIDENT OBAMA: We write you to express concern for the nine undocumented young people who earlier this week attempted to re-enter the United States from Mexico to return to their homes. They presented themselves at a check point, were detained by U.S. border patrol and are currently being held in the Eloy detention center in Arizona.

As we understand it, these "DREAMers" are asking that discretion be exercised by federal authorities to allow them back into the United States and to return to their families and communities. An additional goal that they express is to work to change a system that has resulted in the deportations of DREAMers. Regardless of whether we feel their actions are the best way to affect the change they desire, we share their goal to allow DREAMers and others with strong ties to the United States and who were deported to return to the United States. You stood firmly with the DREAMers when you put in place beneficial case by case relief for DREAMers through Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals (DACA). We believe that the DREAMers currently detained on the border should have your concern and consideration, as well.

We understand that a long term legislative solution is required in order to provide the most justice for the most people. We are deeply committed to ensure that the ability to return to the U.S. for previously deported individuals is enacted into law, and have worked hard to incorporate such relief into the bipartisan proposal currently being drafted in the House of Representatives. We continue to build the bipartisan support