Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 14, 2013

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hagel,

We are concerned by reports that you may force mandatory furloughs on the civilian employees of the Department of Defense even though this may not be required in all cases. Over the last few months, senior leaders from the Department of Defense have repeatedly told Congress that they are deeply worried about the impact of furloughs on civilian DOD employees. Additionally, you and other DOD leaders have asked for flexibility in implementing the cuts required by sequestration.

Unfortunately, media reports indicate that you are still planning to implement mandatory DOD civilian furloughs, even though some of the agencies and departments under your leadership have found ways to avoid furloughs. We believe this policy of mandatory civilian furloughs in every single department and agency is deeply misguided and urge you to change course.

We understand that sequestration is imposing significant pain on the Department of Defense and we support removing sequestration in a fiscally responsible manner. We also agree with you that if sequestration is imposed, the Department of Defense should have the flexibility to implement sequestration prudently. The idea of mandating civilian furloughs across the DOD flies in the face of implementing sequestration prudently. If the Department of the Navy or other DOD agencies can find ways to avoid furloughs, you should allow them the flexibility to do so and protect our civilian workforce.

Requiring unnecessary civilian furloughs is bad policy and has the appearance of an attempt to impose pain for political gain. We run the risk of losing civilian employees, or causing them unnecessary harm, who have invaluable institutional memory and who perform essential operations. We urge you to allow the departments and agencies under your leadership to avoid civilian furloughs if they are able. Our civilian workforce plays a key role in our national security and we should do all that we can to minimize the negative impact on them due to sequestration.

Sincerely,

Bill Johnson

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Letter to Secretary Hagel
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Walter B Jones

Charles B Rangel

Tom Cole

Glenn GT Thompson

Mo Brooks

Matthew A Cartwright

Judy Chu