

*December 8, 2005*

The Honorable John Warner The Honorable Carl Levin

Chairman Ranking Member

Committee on Armed Services Committee on Armed Services

United States Senate United States Senate

228 Russell Building 228 Russell Building

Washington, DC 20510 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Duncan Hunter The Honorable Ike Skelton

Chairman Ranking Member

Committee on Armed Services Committee on Armed Services

U.S. House of Representatives U.S. House of Representatives

2120 Rayburn HOB 2120 Rayburn HOB

Washington, DC 20515 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Colleagues:

Congratulations on House and Senate passage of the Fiscal Year 2006 Defense Authorization bill. You all worked diligently to shepherd through the House and Senate bi-partisan legislation with many important provisions benefitting our troops.

As you proceed to conference, we recommend your close attention to language included in the House-passed bill (Section 566 - Establishment of Combat Medevac Badge) which recognizes the combat service of helicopter medical evacuation ambulance pilots and crews - crews that served in extraordinarily hazardous circumstances in Korea, Vietnam, and subsequently. We urge retention of this provision which provides for the creation of a new "Combat Medevac Badge" to be awarded to such crews, commonly referred to as "Dustoff" crews, in recognition of their service.

These heroic Americans have served with distinction in combat situations while providing medical assistance. Dustoff crews flew nearly a half-million missions and evacuated more than 900,000 military personnel and Vietnamese civilians between 1962 and 1973. The names of 214 Dustoff pilots and crewmen who made the ultimate sacrifice are etched on the Wall of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. We urge you to join us in properly recognizing helicopter medical evacuation pilots and crew members by retaining the House-passed language that creates the

Combat Medevac Badge.

Thank you for your attention to this important item. We commend you on your efforts to date and look forward to working with you in the coming weeks in support of passage of the Defense Authorization bill.

Sincerely,

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Arlen Specter Tim Holden

United States Senate U.S. House of Representatives

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John E. Sununu Richard Durbin

United States Senate United States Senate

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Joseph R. Pitts Bill Shuster

U.S. House of Representatives U.S. House of Representatives

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Rob Simmons Carolyn McCarthy

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Paul E. Gillmor James P. McGovern

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Phil Gingrey

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