



The Coalition to Save our Military Shopping Benefits

June 10, 2015

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
United States Senate
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Mikulski,

The Coalition to Save our Military Shopping Benefits represents millions of active duty service members, National Guard and Reserve, retirees, veterans, military families, survivors, and persons with disabilities. We strongly support your amendment to the *National Defense Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2016* that restores \$322 million in commissary funding.

The Senate Armed Service Committee's version of the Defense Bill sets in motion price increases and reduced operating hours, and would severely damage a benefit long cherished by millions of service members and their families who rely on the 30 percent savings commissaries provide. These cuts also occur without the benefit of a report requested by the Committee in the FY15 National Defense Authorization Act that has yet to be provided to Congress.

These cuts will dismantle the commissary benefit, relied upon by millions of military service members and their families, and will severely impact those who need it most—junior enlisted families, fixed income retirees, and surviving families. Military families rely on this benefit to stretch their household budgets and provide healthy food for the well being of their families. Further, diminished savings at commissaries also will reduce traffic at exchange operations and damage their ability to finance essential military community support programs.

Commissary and exchanges are a vital part of military pay and compensation. The military community greatly value and use these earned benefits. They consistently rank them as a top compensation benefit, yielding returns to patrons and the DoD that far outweigh taxpayer support. Moreover, service members and their families are partners with taxpayers, having financed billions of dollars in facilities and quality of life programs.

We recognize that all Defense programs must strive for efficiency and commissaries have done just that by reducing operating costs nearly 40 percent. Military resale programs also provide critical jobs for military families and veterans—over 60 percent of employees

1101 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 1002, Washington, DC 20005, www.saveourbenefit.org

are military connected with nearly 30 percent of the workforce being military family members.

We greatly appreciate your continued efforts to protect these critical earned benefits, which are the benchmark for our nation's commitment to our service members and their families who sacrifice the most for our freedom.

Sincerely,

Member Organizations, The Coalition to Save Our Military Shopping Benefits

Fleet Reserve Association (FRA)

National Military Family Association (NMFA)

Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)

The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA)

Association of the United States Army (AUSA)

American Veterans (AMVETS)

United States Army Warrant Officers Association (USAWOA)

Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America (JWV)

Association of the United States Navy (AUSN)

Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)

Military Partners and Families Coalition (MPFC)

American Military Society (AMS)

National Association for Uniformed Services (NAUS)

American Military Retirees Association (AMRA)

The American Military Partner Association (AMPA)

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivor (TAPS)

National Industries for the Blind (NIB)

American Logistics Association (ALA)

Armed Forces Marketing Council (AFMC)