

Military Families Respond to Proposed Commissary Budget Cuts

Over the past few weeks, our Association has been closely studying the Administration's FY 2016 defense budget to determine how it will affect military families. In keeping with the past few years of belt-tightening, the budget includes several proposals that cut into military families' purchasing power. Yet, of all the cuts included in the budget, none are as harmful to military families' finances as the plan's proposal for the commissary. If enacted, the proposals would effectively gut the commissary over the long term, ending a valuable benefit that military families have relied on for generations.

Proposed cuts to the commissary budget could ultimately lead to a complete loss of this benefit. We are fighting back against this proposition, and reached out to military families for their comments: Would you continue shopping there if the prices increased?

"I would seriously reconsider shopping at the commissary if prices increased. This would negatively impact our junior enlisted families in particular."

"No...Not if they increased 20-30%."

"The reason I do shop there is because my overall bill is always cheaper compared to when I shop at other stores. I wouldn't shop there if they raised prices, there's no benefit to it."

"If prices increase then there is no benefit to shopping there."

"Our family needs the commissary. We have one option when it comes to shopping off post, and we wouldn't be able to afford a decent amount of groceries for our family if we had to shop off post. Too tight of a budget, the commissary prices allow us to feed our families without struggling."

"There are way fewer options especially with healthier choices. It saves us hundreds every month and we don't live on post. There's no point in going out there if it's not saving us money."

"Raise prices and many will go elsewhere and jobs will be lost...Military families should be given kudos for managing to make ends meet-don't take away another benefit and put more families on welfare."

"The current commissary prices are huge assistance to our limited budget."

"Don't raise prices and don't take away the commissary. It is part of our earned benefits. It would cost jobs, quality of service, quality of life issues."

"In Hawaii, the commissary can be the reason a young family stays solvent. Yes, they get COLA, but at \$7 a gallon for milk, \$35 for a container of formula, that COLA disappears fast."

"We rely on the commissary for their amazing prices on our staples (meat, milk), and if they increase prices, it won't save us any money to shop there."

"I am a widow on SBP and SS. I need the commissary and I use it weekly. It is very necessary and appreciated."

"My family drives out of our way to shop at the Commissary for the lower prices and the safe, secure, friendly shopping environment."

“We are a family of six and have been in the military for seventeen years. The Commissary is something we have relied on at every duty station....I personally would rather shop at the Commissary than anywhere else. To me shopping at the Commissary is giving back to my military who has given so much to me.”

“Our family depends upon the commissary and even enjoy some organic options for produce. As a young airman and even now 16 years later as an NCO family we really appreciate and utilize our commissary benefit often.”

“Our family needs the commissary! We can't get enough groceries for our grocery budget off post. We drive an hr to get to the nearest commissary.”

“As we move from town to town the commissaries are always familiar, even in a new to me commissary. I always shop at the commissary but if it is no longer the least expensive place to get groceries I would not shop there. We work hard for our \$ so we try to spend it wisely.”

“We have orders back to SoCal this summer which has a very high cost of living. Regular grocery stores are so expensive. It's a huge benefit. I shop at the commissary on a regular basis, whether we live on base or not.”

“As a family with some pretty significant food allergies, it is really difficult and expensive trying to find items that are safe for my family to eat at regular grocery stores and even local specialty shops...We have been blessed, however, because the Commissary carries these items on a regular basis and their prices are often half of that found in ANY local store...Shopping at the Commissary makes it possible for us to not only easily find the items we need, but it also makes it affordable.”

“Communities without grocery stores are called food deserts... And they tend to be less healthy because of the lack of access to fresh fruit, vegetables and healthy foods. Closing the commissaries would turn our bases into these- which is at odds with the goals and needs of the military.”

“I have been shopping at the commissary for well over 40 years and it's the only place I shop. For us, the commissary is a convenient place and I know that there are retirees that drive two/three hours to use the commissary. If you take this benefit away you will be hurting thousands of people.”

“I drive out of my way so if the price increased it wouldn't be affordable.”

“I love shopping at our small local commissary. The quality and price of meat is so much better. I am able to feed my family of 5 on a budget around 100 a week. So many of the military discounts and benefits are gone. Families need to eat and why pay more for poorer quality at the big chain stores.”

“The military has received the worst annual pay raises in over 50 years under this administration. Then, they reduce our BAH benefits. Now, there has been nonstop talk about changing our retirement benefits and Tricare overhaul. If they reduce our commissary benefits it's like rubbing salt in the wound.”

“The REASON I shop there is because of the PRICES. It helps me stretch our dollar, enables us to use funds towards our children's needs & entertainment. I don't see me making the 8 mile trip anymore if the prices change to the same price as my grocer three blocks away.”

“As a spouse at one of the remote locations, I can honestly say taking away or reducing our commissary benefit will impact our finances and food choices....There are few jobs for spouses here and cutting employees will cause more problems.”

“If prices increase at the commissary, what would be the point of shopping there? I try hard to shop the commissary...If prices increase it would cease to be a choice at all.”