



Coalition and Valued Associates Advocacy and Actions...

Military and veterans service organizations, to include Coalition valued associate members, have repeatedly called on Congress to end sequestration, rallied their members to storm the Hill, and continue to urge the military community to contact their Members of Congress. If sequestration continues in fiscal year 2016 and beyond, these prominent organizations warn that we will once again be facing drastic cuts to military and civilian personnel; compromising military readiness; and jeopardizing critical earned benefits and programs for our service members and their families – to include Commissary and Exchange benefits, and essential Morale, Welfare, and Recreation programs.

According to a recent survey by First Command Financial Services, military families are experiencing a high level of anxiety regarding sequestration and cuts to the Defense budget. The [First Command Financial Behaviors Index®](#), reveals that:

Seventy-six percent of middle-class military families (senior NCOs and commissioned officers in pay grades E-6 and above with household incomes of at least \$50,000) say that during the past year someone in their household has experienced one or more mental or physical health-related issues commonly associated with financial worries. That's up significantly from 65 percent in 2013 and 62 percent in 2012.

Mental or physical health problems are particularly prevalent among military families who report high levels of concern over sequestration and the financial impact of anticipated cuts to defense spending. The Index reveals that 89 percent of survey respondents who feel extremely or very anxious about sequestration also report that someone in their family has experienced one or more of these health challenges...

Military families are concerned with job security due to downsizing and with the likelihood that their pay and benefits will be cut. An article that ran in this week's Government Executive, Pay and Benefits Watch, [Military Families Are More Worried Than Ever About the Effects of Budget Cuts](#), referenced the First Command survey:

"Almost seven-in-10 survey respondents indicate anxiety regarding sequestration and almost half expect to be extremely or very affected by anticipated cuts to defense spending," said Scott Spiker, CEO of First Command Financial Services Inc. The Defense Department has planned to downsize in the coming years because of troops withdrawing from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The anxiety is wide-ranging, covering fears over smaller annual pay increases and benefits, such as housing allowances, education and retirement, to relocation concerns related to BRAC (although Congress so far has rejected the Obama administration's calls for more Base Realignment and Closure rounds).

Military families are cutting back on daily spending, increasing their savings and pulling back on investments, according to the survey.

Military service organizations continue to call on Congress to end sequestration and support funding for critical military pay and benefits, and family support programs. Joyce Raezer, Executive Director for the National Military Family Association warns:

"My message to everybody is, don't think that as those deployments and as the wars wind down, our military families are going to need less support. We think in many ways they're going to need more, because they're going to have to deal with legacy of that time at war."