2 May 2012

On behalf of the members of the Association of the United States Army, I write to request your support to prevent unreasonable statutory restrictions on federal agency participation in association events. The provisions of Section 308 of HR 2146 and title V of S. 1789 would dramatically restrict participation by military and federal civilian personnel in events sponsored by military, veterans and other associations.

AUSA fully supports congressional efforts to increase transparency and accountability in government spending. However, the legislation in question, while designed to limit spending on government-sponsored conferences and travel expenses, would actually have a chilling effect on government employees' participation in non-governmental meetings and conferences.

Our association hosts multiple events each year at national, state and local levels. Participation by military and civilian leaders is essential to the national defense and educational purposes of these events. The dialogue that takes place at such meetings between the government and the private sector is essential to the development of informed policymaking.

In particular, dialogue at AUSA symposia allows the armed services to explain their needs to industry and allows industry to provide insights and new ideas that are vital in an era of constrained resources. Limiting this contact could have dire consequences not only for our armed forces, but also for the industrial base. The dangers of government operating in a vacuum – with fewer opportunities to learn and exchange information with private industry in a conference, meeting or symposium setting – are too great to ignore.

Therefore, we urge the Congress to revise or delete the provisions cited before the Senate considers HR 2146 or the House considers S. 1789.

Sincerely,

GORDON R. SULLIVAN

General, USA Retired