



ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

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General Gordon R. Sullivan
United States Army (Ret.)
President

24 April 2012

On behalf of the membership of the Association of the United States Army, I write to urge you to reject the Department of Defense budget proposal that would create a BRAC-like commission to change the current military retirement system. The history of military retirement reform shows the need for caution and deliberation. The 1986 REDUX plan cut the 20-year retirement value by 25 percent. Recruitment and retention problems quickly followed, impelling Congress to repeal the system in 2001.

A one year BRAC-like commission inhibits substantive review and necessitates resorting to existing studies that propose deeper benefit cuts than the failed REDUX system. A limited congressional review with no opportunity for amendments or significant debate is unwise for a retirement system so vital to national security - greater scrutiny is needed, not less.

Recent retirement system proposals aimed at “civilianizing” the military system show a complete failure to understand the enormous gulf between a Soldier’s career in the profession of arms and the corporate workforce. A “401-k” type plan eliminates the predictability of benefits and offering retirement benefits earlier in a career reduces the incentives for the best and brightest to serve a full career in uniform and diminishes the benefits of those who do.

A military career requires extraordinary sacrifice by those serving. A military career requires extraordinary sacrifice by those serving and their families over decades – in essence, they write a blank check to the United States for an amount up to and including their life. The unique nature of military retirement benefits plays a key role in inducing high quality people to serve a full career under arduous conditions that civilians simply do not face. Changes to that system must be made after careful consideration rather than a “quick-fix” up or down vote.

Sincerely,
GORDON R. SULLIVAN
General, USA Retired