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I'm writing on behalf of the 100,000 members of Association of the United States Army, to strongly express my belief that there should not be cuts in military manpower as a means of reducing future military budgets.

Recent newspaper articles indicate that there may be reductions in military manpower, as well as cuts in their healthcare benefits, as possible bill payers for the presumed lower defense budgets. Coincidentally, other articles made public the fact that last year our military forces lost more personnel to suicide than to enemy action, thus highlighting the need for better psychological care for battle-weary Soldiers. I think all of this information needs to be taken into consideration before making such decisions regarding manpower reductions and long-term health care adjustments. In my opinion, some battlefield wounds will have lifelong effects.

Lifetime treatment will likely be required to treat the traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress that afflict more and more of our troops as they repeatedly return to the battlefield. Reducing health care benefits, or shifting their costs to beneficiaries, is not the way to reward military personnel for the enormous sacrifices made by them and their families for our nation.

Reducing our troops in the future will not alleviate the silent injuries our soldiers are suffering from repeated deployments – it will only make them worse. Already we are asking too much of too few. It defies logic to suggest that our nation can continue to fight two wars with even fewer Soldiers. The easy solution always seems to be to cut manpower with resulting unintended consequences.

I urge Congress to reconsider using military manpower or military healthcare as a bill payer for smaller defense budgets. In fact, I suggest the best way to provide for our military personnel, who sacrifice so much for our freedom, would be to instead hold manpower levels steady and provide more medical

care that addresses the psychological needs of our over-stretched military force.

Sincerely,

GORDON R. SULLIVAN  
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