



AUSA

Torchbearer Messenger

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*Soldier pay and
quality of life*



America's Army is more active today than at any point in peacetime history. Soldiers and families have contributed much. All should be proud of their selfless service to Nation. Army is trained and capable of doing whatever the Nation asks at home and abroad. But is becoming increasingly fragile.

Underresourced defense is in serious downward spiral affecting readiness, recruiting and retention.

To keep quality people, defense spending must be increased, the pay comparability gap must be closed and soldiers' quality-of-life programs must be funded.

Twenty-five years ago, a covenant was struck with volunteer professional force. Enduring hardships and risks on behalf of American people would be adequately compensated. Volunteer force won Cold War and the Gulf War and has been committed to countless and too often bloody contingencies around the world.

Today's force is overcommitted, underresourced and underpaid. Substantial pay gap, currently 14%, between civilians and soldiers and the young non commissioned and commissioned officers who lead them.

Proposed pay increases in next two fiscal years doesn't get the job done.

Too many soldiers and their families depend on food stamps, supplemental program for Women, Children and Infants (WIC), Army Emergency Relief, parent's financial help or over extended credit to get to the end of the month.

Highly trained professional soldiers are leaving the armed forces prematurely.

Result is growing recruiting problem and an emerging retention problem. Nation's unwillingness to provide adequate pay, equitable retirement benefits, adequate housing and health care represents a serious challenge to covenant and the future of professional force. Three percent of GDP spent on defense is not enough.

Washington Post editorial nails it: "no democracy wants to spend money on its army in an era of relative peace, but such peace is much less likely to endure if the United States fails to maintain a strong and ready force."

Association of the United States Army, speaking for the Total Army, is Torchbearer for strong defense, dedicated to fighting for adequate defense spending, closing the pay gap and restoring retirement pay.

The defense of our Nation is a shared responsibility of men and women in uniform, civilians, and our elected and appointed leaders. Everyone's voice must be strong to be heard.

For additional information, refer to AUSA's website at www.ausa.org.