

June 4, 2015

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Heck
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
Subcommittee on Military Personnel
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Davis
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
Subcommittee on Military Personnel
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the more than 158,000 members of the American Dental Association (ADA) we would like to thank you for extending the current law as it relates to the military ranks of dental officers, which will ensure the continuation of quality oral health care for our nation's servicemembers.

We are also contacting you to bring to your attention our objection to Section 502 of the Senate version of the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act that would reduce the rank for the Chief Dental Officers of the United States Army Dental Corps and the United States Air Force Dental Corps from the current statutory grade of Major General to "a grade above the grade of colonel..."

The statutory requirement for the chief dentist in the rank of Major General for the Army was established by Public Law 95-485 in 1978. For the Air Force, the requirement was established by Public Law 109-364 in 2006. This later change in Title 10 was a recognition by the Congress that there should be not only parity of grade for the chief dental officers of the Army and Air Force, but also of the importance of oral health in assuring medical readiness and timely deployment of the members of the armed services. In recognition of the importance of oral health and readiness, the Department of the Navy in 2009 supported a change to the Title 10 of Section 5138 that would have achieved rank parity for the Navy Dental Corps Chief to be a Rear Admiral (Upper Half or O-8). At any given time, there is only one General or Flag Officer in the Dental Corps for the Army, the Air Force or the Navy. Therefore, a reduction would not eliminate a General/Flag Officer billet, and any savings would be limited to the difference in compensation for a one-star and a two-star officer.

As you know, dental readiness in the military is a critically important issue for overall medical readiness. The ADA firmly believes that dentistry must maintain its position within the

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respective surgeon generals' offices to ensure that dental readiness is not only maintained, but improved. Reduction in rank of the chief dental officer will result in a diminution of oral health readiness at a time when the services have just begun to achieve the overall dental health levels necessary to support national defense.

The ADA is also