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7TH DISTRICT, OHIO



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JUSTICE, SCIENCE, AND RELATED AGENCIES
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VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES
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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 22, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of the constituents in the Seventh Congressional District of Ohio, I want to welcome you to Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base, home of the 121st Air Refueling Wing and the consolidated units of the Tuskegee Airmen following World War II. I fully understand the difficult challenges the Department of Defense is facing under the current budget constraints. However, I want to express my concerns about the proposed cuts to the Air National Guard as outlined in your budget proposal for fiscal year 2013. This issue needs your attention as it appears the National Guard, in particular the Ohio National Guard, was targeted with a disproportionate share of reductions that will result in the loss of several aircraft and thousands of jobs. In fact, Ohio stands to lose more than 1,200 jobs if all locations, including Rickenbacker, Springfield and Mansfield, do not receive a re-mission.

The fact that the Air National Guard provides 35 percent of the Air Force fighter, tanker, and airlift capabilities at a cost of only six percent of the Air Force's overall budget, should not be taken for granted. In 2010, the men and women of the Ohio Air National Guard were deployed around the world for nearly 200,000 days and protected our homeland through missions such as the National Air and Space Intelligence Center (NASIC) and the Aerospace Control Alert. Furthermore, the Ohio Air National Guard KC-135s and C-27Js supported airborne refueling and tactical airlift operations in Libya, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

As proposed, the 121st here at Rickenbacker stands to lose one third of their aircraft resulting in the loss of nearly 200 jobs despite a proven track record of outstanding accessibility, performance and rapid response. In addition, the reduction of six KC-135 aircraft at Rickenbacker appears to be contradictory to the new strategic direction to shift our focus to the Pacific region, which will increase the need for air refueling capabilities and create a greater demand on our air refueling assets. While our military is faced with difficult budget considerations, any reductions must be done in a manner that continues to ensure mission capability and a strong national defense.

Mr. President, I respectfully ask for your attention to this important issue and urge you to reconsider the proposed cuts to aircraft and personnel throughout the National Guard. As you further evaluate these reductions, as a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I stand ready to assist you.

Sincerely,

Steve Austria
Member of Congress

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