

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 24, 2016

The Honorable Ashton B. Carter  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1400 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Carter:

We were dismayed to learn that nearly 10,000 service members, including many brave Californians who served our country with honor and distinction over multiple combat tours, have been ordered to pay back enlistment bonuses and other benefits that they were given nearly a decade ago. This is unfair and appalling and we request that you halt the collection of these bonuses immediately.

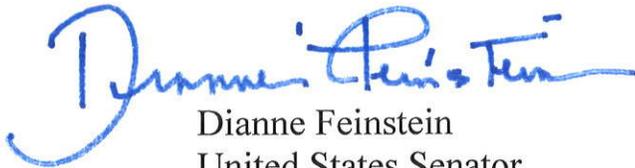
Thousands of our service members are paying the price for mistakes made by California National Guard managers, some of whom are now serving jail time or paying restitution for their crimes. It is outrageous to hold these service members and their families responsible for the illegal behavior of others.

These men and women voluntarily reenlisted with the understanding that they would receive substantial bonuses. They accepted these incentive payments in good faith and at the height of the Iraq War, when the Department was having difficulty retaining service members. Many of these individuals paid a heavy price for their service – including severe injuries sustained after reenlisting. Now they are facing interest charges, wage garnishment, tax liens, and other penalties.

Many service members have sought relief, only to have their appeals rejected. We believe the Department of Defense should use its existing authority under 37 USC 303a(e) to waive the repayment of these enlistment bonuses. We agree that seeking to claw back these payments from those who served our country “would be against equity and good conscience” and “would be contrary to the best interests of the United States.” We also request that you take action to help those service members who have already fully or partially repaid these incentives.

We look forward to your prompt response and to working with you to quickly resolve this pressing issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dianne Feinstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being particularly prominent.

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barbara Boxer". The signature is highly stylized and cursive, with the first name being particularly prominent.

Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator