



June 9, 2014

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

As your Committee works to advance the FY 2015 Defense Appropriations Bill later this week, we strongly urge you to reject efforts to block the ability of defense officials to enact policies aimed at reducing tobacco use among active duty service members.

As you know, great strides have been made in reducing tobacco use and helping current tobacco users quit. However, tobacco use continues to be the leading cause of preventable death in the United States and while tobacco use has declined among service members, it remains higher among people serving in the military than in the civilian population. According to the Department of Defense (DoD) data, in 2011 smoking rates were 24.4 percent for Navy personnel and 30.8 percent for Marines, and the rates for smokeless tobacco were 16.9 percent and 31.9 percent, respectively. By comparison, an estimated 19.0 percent adults in the general population reported they were cigarette smokers in 2011, while only 3.2 percent reported using smokeless tobacco.

In 2012, Secretary Mabus stated that “tobacco use is the most avoidable public health hazard in the Navy and Marine Corps” and he has recently indicated that the Navy is considering ending sales of tobacco products in exchanges and on ships. It is important to note that Secretary Mabus has not proposed prohibiting the use of tobacco by Navy and Marine personnel; he is proposing only to limit its sale on bases and ships. We urge the Committee to reject any amendment that would block this or other efforts to reduce tobacco use in the military.

Secretary Mabus has noted that tobacco use undermines military readiness and has stated “we demand that sailors and Marines be incredibly fit, and we know that tobacco use hurts that fitness.” In 2008, the DoD Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs stated, “Every year, tobacco leads to unnecessary compromises in the readiness of our troops and costs the Department of Defense millions of dollars in preventable health care costs.”

The Navy has already taken steps to reduce tobacco use, including eliminating the sale of tobacco products in commissaries, ending price discounts for products sold in base exchanges, and making free

FDA-approved Nicotine Replacement Therapy products available to all Navy and Marine personnel. Eliminating the sale of all tobacco products on bases and ships, as Secretary Mabus is considering, further demonstrates the significant commitment on the part of the Department of the Navy to improving the health, fitness and readiness of Navy and Marine Corps personnel.

We commend the Department of the Navy for considering this important step and encourage your Committee not to tie the hands of DoD in advancing initiatives that will reduce tobacco use and enhance the health of military personnel.

Sincerely,



Christopher W. Hansen  
President  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network



Sue Nelson  
Vice President, Federal Advocacy  
American Heart Association



Paul G. Billings  
Senior Vice President, Advocacy and Education  
American Lung Association



Matthew L. Myers  
President  
Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids