

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 7, 2018

The Honorable James Mattis
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Mattis:

We are concerned by press reports that the "highest levels" of the Department of Defense have been directed by the President to plan and execute a military parade in Washington, D.C. Reportedly, the order came during a discussion in the Pentagon's Tank, a secure location normally reserved for the most sensitive defense conversations, during what should have been a discussion of the impact of budget negotiations on the Department. It is unclear what military need this event would fulfill.

The United States Armed Forces make up the finest military in the world. It is the solemn duty of those of us in positions of leadership to ensure that they receive our country's full support. In addition to local community activities, Washington, D.C. holds regular ceremonies at each of its military bases, at Arlington National Cemetery for Veterans Day, and major celebrations on the National Mall for Memorial Day and Independence Day that honor the service and sacrifice of our nation's veterans and servicemembers.

Yesterday, you testified to Congress, "Our military remains capable, but our competitive edge has eroded in every domain of warfare—air, land, sea, space, and cyber. Under frequent continuing resolutions and sequester's budget caps, our advantages continue to shrink. The combination of rapidly changing technology, the negative impact on military readiness resulting from the longest continuous stretch of combat in our nation's history, and insufficient funding have created an overstretched and under-resourced military."

In light of these concerns, we ask that you respond to the following questions no later than February 23:

- 1) What is the anticipated total budget for the parade, including but not limited to, the cost of planning the parade, securing the route and viewing areas, transporting personnel and equipment, the salaries of participants, and ancillary costs of such an event, such as the cost of local police, sanitation, and other matters?
- 2) What routine Defense Department training, operations, or functions would be cancelled, rescheduled, or otherwise impacted in order to plan and execute the parade?
- 3) What is the anticipated total number of hours spent by all personnel participating in the planning and execution of the parade?

- 4) How does this cost and military priority rank relative to the military services annual unfunded requirements list, which outline each service's most important "next available dollar" needs?

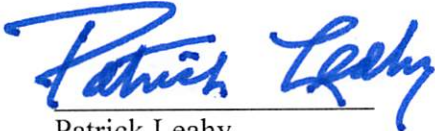
At a time of war, with American servicemembers serving in harm's way, such a parade seems to be inappropriate and wasteful. Every penny of the millions of dollars that the parade would cost and every second of the tens of thousands of personnel hours its execution would require, should be devoted to the most essential missions of the Department of Defense – protecting the American people and our security interests.

Thank you for your cooperation, and we look forward to your reply.

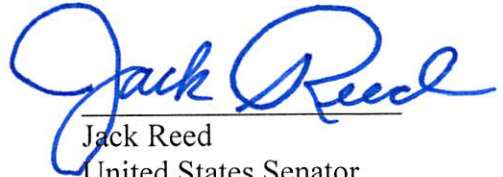
Sincerely,



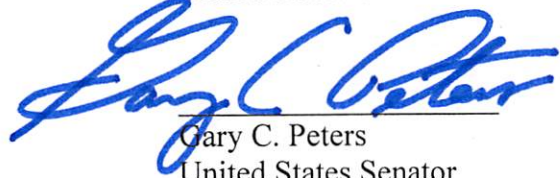
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator