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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-4803

July 21, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We hope you will express support for efforts to recognize the National Guard's new and broader role in our Nation's defense and provide the Chief of the National Guard a vote on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The men and women of the National Guard have been serving our nation at record levels in Iraq and Afghanistan, providing more than 40 percent of the combat force in those two nations and functioning in every conceivable role. The service of these men and women illustrates the evolution of the National Guard's mission in America's military forces.

Since 9-11, the Guard's role has expanded substantially to include greater responsibility for ensuring homeland security as well as long and repeated deployments overseas. In recognition of the Guard's unique role in our national security efforts, the House of Representatives passed the National Defense Authorization bill, which included the provisions of the Guardians of Freedom Act, legislation crafted to elevate the Chief of the National Guard to a position on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

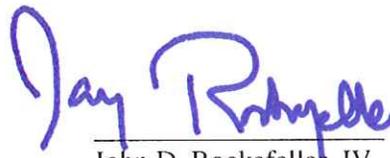
The Guard has special needs that are only fully understood by the leadership within the Guard, and, like the Marines, which is represented on the Joint Chiefs even though the Marines are not considered a separate branch of the military, the National Guard performs unique functions as part of our total force structure.

You embraced this concept in 2008 in your "Blueprint for Change, Barack Obama's Plan for America," saying the National Guard should have a seat at the table. The House has now endorsed the concept.

With the Senate preparing to consider the National Guard Empowerment and State-National Defense Integration Act, as well as the companion measure to the House-passed Defense Authorization bill, your continued advocacy in securing a position for the National Guard on the Joint Chiefs is necessary to shepherding this legislation into law.

Sincerely,

  
Nick Rahall, II  
Member of Congress

  
John D. Rockefeller, IV  
Senator

  
Joe Manchin  
Senator