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Testimony before the Joint Economic Committee
United State Senate
United States House of Representatives
Senator Charles E. Schumer, Chairman
June 12, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Fight Now, Pay Later? I'll say. It is my belief we are only now seeing the tip of an iceberg, "The Future Costs of Funding the Iraq War" and unless we collectively deal with that iceberg, it will indeed sink us.

I'm going to focus today on some of the often unseen costs in my very rural state. Montana's land mass of 147,000 square miles is an enormous gift, and a bigger challenge. If we were to overlay Montana's map on a map of this area of the country, Montanans live in an area stretching from this table in Washington, DC to the kitchen table of a family in Bangor, Maine.

Let me tell you what that means for a family in Scobey trying to find professional help for their son, a veteran of a National Guard infantry deployment who suffers severe Post-traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms. The family lives in far North East Montana:

720 miles round trip to Billings, a city of 100,000 -- Montana's largest
440 miles round trip to Miles City, a city of 8,500
260 miles round trip to Sidney, a town of 5,000
88 miles round trip to Plentywood, a town of 2,000

...and nearly a thousand mile round trip from our capital, Helena, where Montana's National Guard is headquartered and where Montana's only Veterans Administration Hospital is located.

Outside of Billings, Eastern Montana is served by one psychiatrist, who does not accept Medicare, Medicaid or VA patients. There are no psychologists in far eastern Montana, just a few dedicated and over worked mental health counselors. The travel to see these professionals presents the additional burden of time away from work and expensive gasoline, food and motel rooms.

These are the "Costs of Funding the Iraq War" that won't appear on any government spreadsheet or in any of your budget documents.

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One in six Montanans age 18 and older is a veteran, a per capita number second only to Alaska. Since late 2002, Montana's Veterans Affairs Division has seen a 41% increase in veteran's disability compensation claims for military service connected disabilities from that veteran's population. The great majority of that increase is due to the return of combat veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. The signature characteristics of those claims include a higher quantity of disabling and more complex conditions including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury. The Division requested and was authorized three additional service officers in 2003, two in 2007 and will request three more in the coming legislative session in 2009. If approved in 2009, the state's investment would then total nearly \$300,000 in personnel service expenditure due, in very large part, to the Global War on Terror.

Montana's National Guard of over 3500 members, serve in 22 armories and facilities scattered across the state. In the Army National Guard our men and women average 31 years of age, just less than half are married, and have an average of 1.8 dependents. Some 412 have a Bachelors' Degree or higher, over 500 are full time Guard, and over 2100 are traditional citizen soldiers. Montana now records 1954 Army deployments and 724 Air tours.

Montana National Guard Adjutant General Randy Mosley has a daunting challenge: to ensure all his soldiers and airmen scattered across those 147,000 square miles of Montana are trained and ready prior to being called for state or federal service, and ensuring those returning home from any deployment are fully reintegrated into their family, their community and their unit.

Our failure at meeting that second challenge, the successful reintegration of deployed soldiers resulted in the suicide of a young Montanan Chris Dana. Let me read the first few lines of a December 2007 McClatchy News Service story:

HELENA, Mont. — Chris Dana came home from the war in Iraq in 2005 and slipped into a mental abyss so quietly that neither his family nor the Montana Army National Guard noticed.

He returned to his former life: a job at a Target store, nights in a trailer across the road from his father's house.

When he started to isolate himself, missing family events and football games, his father urged him to get counseling. When the National Guard called his father to say that he'd missed weekend duty, Gary Dana pushed his son to get in touch with his unit.

"I can't go back. I can't do it," Chris Dana responded.

Things went downhill from there. He blew through all his money, and last March 4, he shot himself in the head with a .22-caliber rifle. He was 23 years old.

As Gary Dana was collecting his dead son's belongings, he found a letter indicating that the National Guard was discharging his son under what are known as other-than-honorable conditions. The move was due to his skipping drills, which his family said was brought on by the mental strain of his service in Iraq.

The letter was in the trash, near a Wal-Mart receipt for .22-caliber rifle shells.

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Following the tragic death of his step-brother, Matt Kuntz, a Helena lawyer and graduate of West Point, demanded action to ensure other Montana soldiers did not suffer and die as Chris had done. He wrote compelling pieces for Montana newspapers that generated hundreds of calls from across the state to my office.

The result was a Post Deployment Health Reassessment Task Force and subsequent PDHRA Campaign Plan to implement the recommendations of that Task Force....and more.

So far, the Montana National Guard estimates their Campaign Plan implementation has cost over \$200,000. An outline of that effort is attached (Attachment 1) in my written testimony for your review.

We can't put a value on the cost of losing Chris Dana. Nor can we easily quantify the cost to our families, communities and economy of soldiers and airmen unable to return to their job at the fire station, fearful of leading their son's Boy Scout Troop or attending the Fourth of July parade, or too depressed to enjoy a normal evening out with their spouse.

As you know, Montana's fire seasons can be brutal; the state and federal government spend millions of dollars protecting homes, families and resources every summer. A key part of Montana's response is our reliance on the National Guard, both for human resource and equipment and material. The Global War on Terror has and will continue to impact the ability of the National Guard to meet that commitment to domestic emergency preparedness.

Additional information on this issue is also attached, but in summary, General Mosley states that to bring the Montana Army National Guard equipment readiness to 100% would require nearly \$28 million.

The greatest cost to Montana from the Global War on Terror, is, of course the immeasurable loss of soldiers, marines and sailors. Chief, National Guard Bureau, Lt. General Steven Blum was recently in Montana and helped us dedicate a memorial to those young men who lost their lives. The inspirational memorial was created by the step-father of one of the casualties. With your permission, I submit the names that appear on that memorial for the record. They represent Montana's finest, among them the nephew of your colleague, Montana's Senator Max Baucus. They died as young as 18, as old as 42. I am proud to remember them all here today.

MONTANA CASUALTIES – OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

US Army 1LT Edward Saltz, 27, Big Fork, MT who died December 22, 2003 when an improvised explosive device struck his convoy in Baghdad, Iraq.

US Army PFC Owen D. Witt, 20, Sand Springs, MT who died May 24, 2004 in Ad Dwar, Iraq.

US Marine Corps CPL Dean Pratt, 22, Stevensville, MT who died August 2, 2004 due to an enemy action in Al Anbar Province, Iraq.

US Marine Corps LCPL Kane Funke, 20, Kalispell, MT died August 13, 2004 from hostile action in Anbar Province.

US Army SSG Aaron Holleyman, 26, Glasgow, MT who died August 30, 2004 in Iraq when his vehicle hit an improvised explosive device.

US Marine Corps CPL Raleigh Smith, 21, Troy, MT who died December 23, 2004 in Fallujah, Iraq.

MT Army National Guard MSG Robbie McNary, 42, Lewistown, MT who died March 31, 2005 during combat operations in Hewijah, Iraq.

US Marine Corps LCPL Nicholas Bloem, 20, Belgrade, MT who died August 3, 2005 while conducting combat operations in Iraq.

US Army 1LT Josh Hyland, 31, Missoula, MT who died August 21, 2005 when a bomb detonated near his Hummvee.

MT Army National Guard SGT Travis Arndt, 23, of Great Falls, MT who died September 21, 2005 in Kirkurk, Iraq.

US Marine Corps LCPL Andrew Bedard, 19, of Missoula, MT who died October 4, 2005 while conducting combat operations against enemy forces in Iraq.

US Army CPT Michael McKinnon, 30, of Helena, MT who died October 27, 2005 in Baghdad, Iraq when an improvised explosive device detonated near his Hummvee.

US Marine Corps CPL Philip E. Baucus, 28, of Wolf Creek, MT who died July 29, 2006 while conducting combat operations in Anbar Province.

US Marine Corps LCPL Jeremy Sandvick Monroe, 20, of Chinook, MT who died October 8, 2006 while conducting combat operations against enemy forces in Anbar Province.

US Navy PO2 Charles Komppa, 35, Belgrade, MT who died October 25, 2006 while conducting combat operations in Anbar Province.

US Army PFC Shawn Murphy, 24, died December 10, 2006 when a makeshift bomb exploded near his Hummvee in Baghdad, Iraq.

US Army SGT Scott Dykman, 27, Helena, MT who died December 20, 2006 from injuries suffered from a makeshift bomb in Iraq.

US Army PVT Matthew Zeimer, 18, Glendive, MT died February 2, 2007 when he came in contact with enemy forces using small arms fire in Ramadi.

US Army Staff SGT Shane Becker, 35, Helena, MT died April 3, 2007 when his unit came in contact with enemy forces using small arms fire in Baghdad, Iraq.

US Army PFC Kyle Bohrsen, 22, Philipsburg, MT died April 10, 2007 when his vehicle hit a makeshift bomb in Baghdad.

US Army SPC Michael Frank, 36, Great Falls, MT died May 10, 2007 when a makeshift bomb detonated near his Hummvee during combat operations in Baghdad, Iraq.

US Army SPC James Riekema, 22, Missoula, MT died January 14, 2007 when a makeshift bomb exploded near his vehicle in Baghdad, Iraq.

US Army PFC Kristofor Stonesifer, 28, Missoula, MT died October 19, 2001 when his Black Hawk helicopter crashed in Pakistan.

Christopher Michael Dana, 23, MT Army National Guard Helena, MT died March 4, 2007 from a self inflicted gunshot wound after serving in Iraq.

US Army Staff Sergeant Travis W. Atkins, 31, Bozeman, MT died June 1, 2007 when an IED detonated near his unit in Al Yusufiyah.

US Army Specialist Donald M. Young, 19, Helena, MT died Aug 8, 2007 during a roadside bombing in western Baghdad.

US Army Staff Sergeant Yance T. Gray, 29, Ismay, MT died Sept 9, 2007 in the deadliest of vehicle accidents in which seven soldiers died and 11 were wounded.

US Army Private Daren A. Smith, 19, Helena, MT died Dec 13, 2007 from non-combat related injuries

US Army Captain Andrew Pearson, 32, Billings, MT died April 30, 2008 from wounds suffered when his vehicle encountered an IED in Baghdad, Iraq.

US Marine Corps Lance Cpl Nick J. Palmer, 19, Great Falls, MT died Dec 16, 2006 from a gun shot wound in Fallujah, Iraq.

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Attachment 1

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PDHRA Reintegration/Reconstitution Costs

The Montana National Guard (MTNG) has implemented numerous program enhancements to improve and enhance its reconstitution and reintegration programs to better care for returning Soldiers, Airmen, and their families. To date in excess of **\$206,740** has been expended using existing federal resources for these events. Other program enhancements, while having no direct impact to the MTNG, produce costs that are incurred by the Federal Government and Office of the Secretary of Defense that support our MTNG Post Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA) Deployment Cycle Support (DCS) program efforts. A summary of these items follows:

MTNG Costs Expenditures made by the MTNG related to redeployment and reconstitution programs.

Hired a full time PDHRA DCS Program Manager. \$75,000

Conducted Statewide Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Training. \$15,000

Conducted Community Outreach in 20 Montana Communities. \$22,240

Resource Guide \$2,500

Expanded Family Resource Centers Staff in Billings and Kalispell. \$52,000

Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) Contract for Deployment Teacher Education \$15,000

Staff Training and Conferences \$20,000

Public Service Announcements incurred by MT Veteran Affairs cost \$5,000 state funds

Indirect Costs

The following events do not produce direct costs for the MTNG but do have indirect costs incurred by the Federal Government to support our PDHRA program.

Pilot Project with TRIWEST - TRIWEST Healthcare Alliance executed a pilot with Montana that places a behavioral health provider in Helena and Great Falls during monthly drill periods to assist with and augment the period health assessment process. The provider will see any Soldier or Airmen who self assesses or has been deployed for an OIF, OEF, or ONE rotation. The pilot runs from June 08 through Dec 08. Costs are associated with reimbursement of BH providers.

2nd PDHRA - The DOD/NGB authorized the MTNG to conduct a second PDHRA. Costs are associated with on-site teams and contract fees associated with increased call volume through the call center.

Joint Family Support Assistance Program (JFSAP) - Montana is in the final stages of confirming its participation in the JFSAP program. The program extends three new family program resources to the state. Costs are incurred by DoD/NGB on behalf of the state. Prepared by COL Jeff Ireland, J1406-324-30179 June 2008

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Attachment 2

In recent presentations to Montana's Congressional delegation in support of the National Guard Bureau's equipment appropriations request, Montana Adjutant General Randy Mosley presented some startling numbers.

- General Mosley states that to bring the Montana Army National Guard equipment readiness to 100% would require nearly \$26 million as indicated below.

MTARNG Equipment Shortfall -- \$25.7 Million

Larger items in order of priority:

- Chinook-47D - 2 EA - \$10,000,000.
 - HEMMT Fuelers - 13 EA - \$3,499,000.
 - UpArmored HMMWV's - 45 EA - \$6,615,000.
 - HMMWV's w/shelters - 26 EA - \$1,587,000.
 - HEMMT PLS/CGO – 5 EA - \$1,801,000.
 - Dump Trucks - 16 EA - \$1,168,000.
 - Trac Whld Excav – 5 EA - \$550,000.
 - Grader Road – 5 EA – \$490,000.
- Some equipment shortages are the direct result of Montana National Guard overseas deployments, equipment left behind upon return to Montana; others can be attributed indirectly to the overall demand for and loss of equipment and material for Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom and lastly the transformation of numerous Montana units.
 - The equipment shortage includes two Chinook helicopters, equipment that was and is vital to our firefighting operations during Montana's severe fire seasons; basic construction equipment for our new Engineer units; and HMMWVs, fuelers and tactical truck loading systems – a total of some 1607 pieces of equipment.
 - The equipment shortage will continue to compromise the ability of our Soldiers to accomplish both current and future missions successfully.
 - We need the equipment to do necessary training. If units train regularly at home station with the best equipment, then little training is needed in the pre-mobilization period immediately prior to deployment. A 100% optimally equipped Montana Army National Guard will allow training, possible homeland missions, and deployments to all occur simultaneously.