



For Immediate Release
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**Hearing Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Regarding the Effects of Tax and Fiscal Policy on the Military and Veterans
Community**

In a fireside chat during World War II, President Franklin Roosevelt honored America's troops "fighting our enemies in distant parts of the world."

Today, America's armed forces are once again fighting our enemies in distant parts of the world. And once again, we should honor these brave men and women.

But there is much that we can do to support their efforts. That is our task today, and every day. During today's hearing, we will work to identify new ways that we can help.

Our troops bear a heavy burden. They deploy for months — sometimes even years — at a time. They often leave much behind — spouses, children, jobs.

Members of the National Guard and Reserves leave their careers. And too many come home to face financial or marital problems.

In spite of these challenges, our armed forces still answer the call. They bear this burden, because they love their country.

My home state of Montana sends a higher share of its population to serve in Iraq and Afghanistan than almost any other state. This week, hundreds of Montana National Guardsmen said goodbye to their families and began a year-long tour in Iraq. For many, this was their second or third deployment.

In April, I had the honor to meet with members of our armed services in Afghanistan. I saw our brave troops in action.

These men and women work under the most difficult conditions. They serve every day — weekends and holidays — anniversaries and birthdays — 24 hours a day — seven days a week. Our troops are some of the hardest working Americans there are.

They patrol the mountains. They fix trucks. They fire artillery.

They are warriors. And they are diplomats.

They organize meetings known as shuras with local leaders and village elders.

I was struck by their professionalism, their courage, and their tenacity.

We Montanans — and all Americans — are so proud of these men and women. But we must do more than just express our support. We must act to take care of our soldiers, marines, sailors, and airmen when they get home.

So today, this committee will take a hard look at how we can improve tax and fiscal policy to make life better for our military and their families.

We did much in 2008 with the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act. That law eliminated many obstacles in the tax laws that created problems for veterans and service members.

Among other changes, we made permanent the law that combat duty income counts for EITC purposes. We guaranteed that family members of fallen soldiers can take advantage of tax-favored accounts. And we provided disabled veterans with an extra year to claim tax refunds.

But I know that there's more to do.

Today, we will hear how the tax code does not always make allowance for the unique circumstances that our troops and their families face during times of war.

Surviving children of our troops are sometimes subjected to higher tax rates on benefits paid to them.

National Guard and Reserve Troops regularly pay out of their own pockets to drive hours to military training and do not receive reimbursement or a tax deduction for these expenses.

Small businesses who hire guardsmen and reservists see their employees deployed again and again, but are not compensated for their loyal support for their employees.

We need to address concerns like these, and more.

George Washington once said: "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation."

We have a sacred responsibility here. Our armed forces have answered the call. They have shouldered their responsibility. Let us do so as well.

Let us honor the members of America's armed services who have borne this heavy burden. Let us do our part to help those who fight our enemies in distant parts of the world. And let us do what we can to show them that they are appreciated by a grateful nation.

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