

the additional \$20 billion or so which the Joint Chiefs indicated will be required annually over the next 5 years to address personnel, readiness, and modernization deficiencies.

The Congress will have to come to grips with these funding realities or consider significantly scaling back our worldwide commitments. We cannot continue to have it both ways. It is unfair to our men and women in uniform and cannot be sustained over time.

Mr. President, our hearings have substantiated the readiness and funding problem facing our armed forces. The solution to these problems will require the close cooperation between the Congress and the administration. It will require the Congress to relook the balanced budget agreement and will require challenging decisions by all parties. We have no choice but to make careful and deliberate decisions. The future of our Nation and the lives of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines depend on it.

## EXHIBIT 1

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,  
Washington, DC, October 8, 1998.

Hon. WILLIAM S. COHEN,  
Secretary of Defense,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: In light of your recent testimony and the testimony of the Joint Chiefs of Staff before the Committee, it is obvious that maintaining the delicate balance among the key components of personnel and quality of life, readiness and modernization in the FY2000–2005 Future Years Defense Plan will be difficult. The current discussions of “catch-up” pay raises, returning to a richer military retirement system, funding modernization programs, providing adequate training funds and controlling high personnel and operational tempos make your task of setting priorities a significant challenge.

As you develop the defense budget request for fiscal year 2000, it is imperative that the Department thoroughly analyze any proposals to address the pay gap or return to the pre-August 1986 military retirement system. We are totally committed, as we are sure you are, to taking care of our military personnel and their families. However, before enacting any proposals in this area with significant long-term costs, the Department of Defense and the Congress must have a clear view of the likely impact of the proposals on recruiting, retention, and military readiness.

During our hearing on October 6, 1998, you testified that you would address the issues of military pay and retirement in your fiscal year 2000 budget. As you and the Chiefs testified, there are a number of programs that combine to make up Quality of Life for our military personnel and their families, including pay, retirement, housing, health care, personnel tempo and morale and recreation programs and facilities. We believe that recommendations included in your budget request for the areas indicated above must be fully supported by careful analyses justifying the costs and providing assurance of measurable increases in recruiting, retention and military readiness.

We look forward to reviewing your recommendations in the FY 2000 budget request.

Sincerely,

CARL LEVIN,  
Ranking Member.  
STROM THURMOND,  
Chairman.

## NEWMAN POSTAL SITUATION

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, it is with great concern that I rise to address a recurring problem in my state with the United States Postal Service. It seems that we are continually faced with situations where the Postal Service has created controversy by indicating—in some cases—that they will move existing post offices from downtown areas. In Georgia, as in many states, these post offices have been main street fixtures for residents, creating a meeting place for shoppers, business people and officials. The idea of moving these post offices is particularly worrisome for rural areas where local merchants have long relied upon this common bond. It is a problem that Congress should examine in order to work with the Postal Service to promote a better understanding and working relationship with the affected communities.

We currently have a particular case in Newnan, Georgia which illustrates the problem. After receiving word from the community that the post office was moving out of the downtown area, we began contact with the Postal Service to determine whether or not these rumors were true. We gained assurances from the Postal Service that they did not intend to move from the downtown area because there was “overwhelming community support” for keeping it there. Since that time, we have received another report from the Postal Service that, because of security requirements, they indeed may have to move to an alternate location. I am concerned by the lack of clarity in the reports my office has received on this matter and am working to get a clarification from the Postal Service. I would like to reiterate for the record my commitment to maintaining a full service postal facility in downtown Newnan. I would welcome the opportunity to work with local officials and businesses in Newnan and the Postal Service to meet this goal.

As I mentioned, Mr. President, this matter in Newnan is a reflection of the work we have ahead to avoid these controversies between smaller communities and the post office. It is a problem I hope we rectify favorably for the citizens of Newnan in this case, and for people all over America in the future.

## RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, in his capacity as a Senator from the State of Montana, seeing no other Senators desiring to speak, asks unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

There being no objection, at 10:24 a.m., the Senate recessed until 1:29 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BURNS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Alaska.

## OMNIBUS CONSOLIDATED AND EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1999—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be 3 hours equally divided for debate today on the conference report to accompany H.R. 4328, the omnibus appropriations bill for 1999, notwithstanding the receipt of the papers, and that when the Senate receives the conference report, it be considered as having been read with no action other than debate occurring and the vote to occur at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, without any intervening action, debate or motion, and that paragraph 4 of rule XII and all points of order be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Hearing none, without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that 15 minutes of the time under my control as manager of the bill on our side be under the control of Senator GREGG, and that following the vote Senator SPECTER be recognized for up to 15 minutes for general debate, to be followed by Senator ASHCROFT for 30 minutes of general debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, it is with some regret that it is my job to bring before the Senate the Omnibus Consolidated and Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act of 1999. Throughout the year, I have urged that we find a way to move on the individual appropriations bills so that we would avoid a repetition of what took place 2 years ago. Unfortunately, that request was not followed, despite the urging of the distinguished majority leader and minority leader to work with the Appropriations Committee.

We were unable to finish the bills within the normal timeframe this year.

We had an extremely difficult calendar because of the fact that Labor Day—the first Monday was the 7th of September. We then had the Jewish holidays which we were in recess for. We were just unable to finish in time. We had to get first one and then another and then another and now another continuing resolution in order to try and finish our work. I deeply regret the process that we are going through now.

It is my task to present to the Senate, I think, the largest appropriations bill in a decade. Mr. President, it contains a grand total of \$486.8 billion in