

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 7, 2007

The Honorable Robert M. Gates  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Gates:

We are writing to express our disappointment that your office has indicated you may be unable to fulfill your previous commitment to testify before the Senate Budget Committee on the President's Defense Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2008 and War Costs. We urge you to reconsider. It is very important that you provide your testimony to our committee on or before March 1, 2007.

We note that you received a letter signed by the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Committee on January 10 making a formal request for your appearance at this hearing, though hearing arrangements had been discussed well before that date. The Committee scheduled its hearing on the defense budget for February 15 at the request of your office in order to accommodate your schedule. Furthermore, you personally indicated your intention to testify to Senator Conrad prior to your confirmation as Secretary of Defense.

The President's budget request for Fiscal Year 2008 includes \$481 billion for the peacetime operations of the Department of Defense, and a total of \$623 billion when war funding is included. This brings the Department's share of total discretionary budget authority to almost 58 percent, a major share of the total spending under the Budget Committee's jurisdiction.

Receiving your testimony is particularly important for our committee given the conflicting cost estimates associated with the President's proposal to significantly increase troop levels in Iraq and the substantial increase in the DOD budget unrelated to the conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan. As you may know, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office and other defense experts have estimated that this proposal could cost more than the Administration has indicated. We need to hear from you to address these differences as well as to receive a full accounting of the President's overall defense budget request, including his proposal for increased force structure.

Page Two  
The Honorable Robert M. Gates  
February 7, 2007

We respectfully urge you to fulfill your commitment and testify before the Senate Budget Committee as was previously planned.

Sincerely,



KENT CONRAD  
Chairman



JUDD GREGG  
Ranking Member