

Commonwealth of Kentucky

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SENATOR WHITNEY H. WESTERFIELD

August 22, 2014

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the my constituents across Christian, Todd, and Logan counties, I am writing in response to the Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Assessment (SPEA) that is part of the Army 2020 Force Structure Realignment, specifically as it pertains to the region surrounding Fort Campbell, Kentucky. There are significant factors that I urge you to consider when making the force drawdown decisions ahead of you.

First, I want to draw specific attention to the SPEA findings that the Valued Environmental Socioeconomic Component (SPEA Table 4.6-1.) shows a "Significant" impact. The Assessment explains that this impact relates to the ROI covering Christian and Trigg counties in Kentucky and Montgomery and Stewart counties in Tennessee. The Assessment does not, however, include the certain impact awaiting any other surrounding counties, contiguous to those that currently enjoy a part of the \$4.7 billion economic impact of the installation, its compliment of servicemembers and their families. The entire Pennyriple region depends on Fort Campbell as our primary economic driver and employer. Ignoring the immense risk to Todd, Caldwell, Hopkins, Logan, Muhlenberg, Robertson, Dickson and Cheatham counties across Kentucky and Tennessee would be an egregious oversight on the part of the Army. The Assessment's proposed reduction of 16,000 soldiers would be catastrophic for the entire region and I urge you to consider this.

Here are just a few examples of what is at stake: the effect that this will have on funding for public school systems and housing, higher education, business and retail traffic, church attendance and a depletion of our workforce (which alone has deleterious ripple effects). Hopkinsville Community College (HCC) has 41% military-related enrollment. The proposed cuts would reduce enrollment by 700 students, having a disastrous effect on the college and its ability to attract future industrial and business investment in the region. HCC supports our service members with a transition program, assisting them in writing resumes and preparing them for finding a civilian job. This is not the kind of program we should be endangering with such drastic population cuts.

Hopkinsville and the rest of the Pennyriple region goes above and beyond the communities of all other installations to create a great environment for servicemembers and their families, during multiple, long-term deployments, even in retirement. We boast a low cost of living, unique recreational offerings, and comfortable proximity to larger metropolitan centers, an ideal place to station soldiers for an exceptional quality of life.

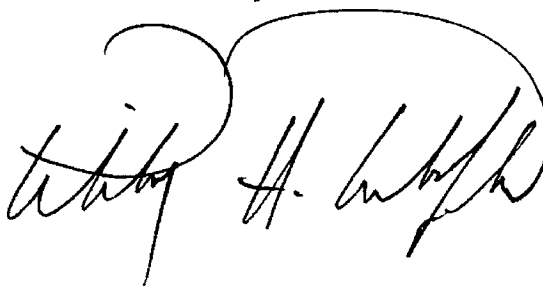
We provide a variety of unique services to our veterans and active duty soldiers. We have many military appreciation events, such as discounted days at our local water park in which attendance reaches over 2,000 soldiers and family members. We also have a local Homeless Veterans Shelter that

serves hundreds of individuals annually. Using the model in place in Montgomery County, Tennessee, Christian County has made great strides to ensure we meet the needs of our most vulnerable veterans and active duty soldiers that enter Kentucky's justice system by implementing a Veteran's Treatment Court (VTC). The VTC is already in use in Kentucky and has already had a tremendous positive impact on the lives of soldiers and their families. In 2013, the Christian County Chamber of Commerce received the US Chamber's Chamber of Valor award by illustrating dedication to finding employment for the soldiers and spouses of Fort Campbell servicemembers, encouraging our local businesses to hire veterans and their spouses. Christian County and the Pennyriple region is deeply dedicated to the soldiers that bring life to the installation, and we pledge to continue to provide support however we can. The Fort Campbell region continues to experience growth and is the second fastest growing Metropolitan Statistical Area in the nation. This growth is largely being fueled by soldiers and their families choosing to live in our community. These are not merely feel-good sentiments. We know that these efforts have a meaningful, positive impact on our soldiers and families because Fort Campbell has the highest re-enlistment rating in the Army (88%). Please see the enclosed list of community leaders and neighbors who have joined in this effort to encourage the Department of the Army to reevaluate the proposed cuts.

I also urge you to reconsider the census data used to inform the Assessment. Like every other military installation experiencing a deployment during a census, Fort Campbell suffers from an inaccurate calculation methodology. The census counts soldiers that are deployed as being stationed at their home of record at the time of their deployment instead of being counted at their last known address which would be within the region of their current duty station. This methodology does not accurately illustrate the number of soldiers who actually live in these areas and will return when they redeploy. As a result, the estimated socioeconomic impact is artificially low for the specified ROI. We can safely assume the damage will be far greater.

I need not report on the elite stature and proud history of Ft. Campbell. When coupled with the strong partnership with the surrounding region, the power and readiness of the Campbell military platform are unique. The Assessment clearly shows that to maximize cost efficiency while still maintaining the highest level of training readiness, Fort Campbell already hits the mark. As you weigh your decision, I urge you to consider the full scope of long-term socioeconomic damage to the entire affected region and reevaluate the extent of personnel cuts at Fort Campbell.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Whitney Westerfield". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning.

Whitney Westerfield
State Senator

cc: Senator Mitch McConnell
Senator Rand Paul
Representative Ed Whitfield
General Raymond T. Odierno, Chief of Staff of the US Army
John M. McHugh, Secretary of the Army

Enclosure