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July 26, 2013

## **Lucio, senators call on Congress to reverse National Guard furloughs**

**AUSTIN** - Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. joined other Texas Senators this week in expressing concerns about the impact federal sequestration will have on Texas civilian employees of the military, in particular National Guard Military Technicians ("MILTECHs").

The Texas Senate Veterans Affairs and Military Installations Committee sent a letter to members of the U.S. Congress, including Texas' delegation members, outlining the impact on military employees in Texas should mandatory furloughs required under sequestration not be reversed. The letter was signed by 24 Texas state senators.

"I join my colleagues in expressing serious concerns about the negative impact furloughs will have on Department of Defense employees, including members of the National Guard and Reserves. The resulting reduction in pay will have disastrous effects on Texas families," Senator Lucio said. "I am particularly concerned about how these sequestration cuts will impact emergency preparedness of our National Guard. Especially during hurricane season, residents of the Texas Gulf rely on these professionals to be available as emergency first-responders. Congressional leaders must reach a budget solution that does not compromise the safety of Texas citizens."

In the Texas counties comprising Senate District 27, represented by Senator Lucio, a total of 19 MILTECHs will be subject to furloughs (six in Cameron County, 12 in Hidalgo County, and one in Willacy County), according to Texas Military Forces.

The text of that letter is attached and reproduced below.

Dear Texas Congressional Delegation Member:

We are writing to urge you to intervene on behalf of the 2,200 Texans serving as Military Technicians who are being inappropriately furloughed by the Department of Defense. The Department of Defense's National Guard Bureau recently issued instructions requiring Texas to furlough 48,000 civilians and Military Technicians (MILTECHs), resulting in a roughly 20 percent pay cut for those employees. This number includes 2,200 MILTECHs, of which nearly 500 are Reserve members.

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National Guard MILTECHs are full-time uniformed military personnel that develop and administer training at the unit level. National Guard MILTECHs also maintain the equipment necessary to conduct unit-level training. A furlough of MILTECHs will directly correlate to reduced training and reduced unit readiness.

The height of hurricane and wildfire season is when National Guard service members should be at their highest level of disaster response preparedness, not the time to reduce readiness and possibly impair the capability of the National Guard. The situation is exacerbated by the 1,500 Texas National Guard service members who are deployed in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The impact of a 20 percent pay cut on individuals and families can be catastrophic, particularly for those at the lower end of the pay scale who are paying their bills month-to-month. With this action alone, as many as one-in-five MILTECHs will become eligible for food stamps or other government assistance.

Adding to the injustice, the National Guard Bureau has the funding to avoid the furloughs but insists that those funds be spent on equipment instead of personnel. No uniformed active duty service members are being affected, but full-time, uniformed service members who are MILTECHs in the National Guard are asked to take a 20 percent pay cut for no logical reason.

Many of the MILTECHs are themselves decorated combat veterans that have served on active duty in Iraq and/or Afghanistan. Do not allow this disservice to our troops to continue. We urge you to contact the Department of Defense and give the state flexibility to implement any necessary reductions in a way that will minimize the direct impact on military personnel. . . .

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