

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 12, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We were pleased to see that the negotiated text of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2023 included a provision to rescind the vaccine mandate for servicemembers. While this is a welcome first step in ending these types of mandates and the harm they have caused, the provision does not rescind the related penalties and forced separations imposed on military personnel, nor on all federal employees.

Servicemembers who were reprimanded or unfairly discharged based solely on COVID-19 vaccination status under the Department of Defense's (DOD) current policy should immediately have their records cleared and be reinstated. The DOD's COVID-19 vaccine mandate is responsible for the discharge of approximately 3,400 troops who have made a decision for themselves in line with their personal values. At a time when our military is facing its greatest recruitment challenges in decades, bringing thousands of troops back into duty is not only the right thing to do, but it is necessary.

In Idaho, we have heard firsthand the challenges servicemembers face in complying with the DOD's onerous COVID-19 vaccine mandate. This includes members of the 366th Fighter Wing, who have made the personal decision to not receive the vaccine. As a result, members of the Fighter Wing have been grounded, issued letters of reprimand, had clearances rescinded and have been removed from training opportunities due to sincerely-held beliefs.

Further, we have also heard from many federal employees throughout several agencies in Idaho who have been unfairly terminated due to their COVID-19 vaccination status. The ability for a person to make their own vaccination decisions should not only extend to members of the military, but to all federal employees as well. We believe the decision to take or reject the vaccine, whether due to religious beliefs, medical conditions or any other reason, is a decision individuals should make for themselves in consultation with their health care provider.

As such, we respectfully reiterate our request that after the passage of the NDAA, any penalties incurred from a servicemember's refusal to receive the COVID-19 vaccine be

expunged from their records, and any servicemember or federal employee who was unfairly discharged or terminated due to these mandates be reinstated. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



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Mike Crapo  
U.S. Senator



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James E. Risch  
U.S. Senator