



# AIR FORCE SERGEANTS ASSOCIATION

*Serving the Total Air Force Enlisted Corps and Their Families – Past, Present, and Future*

## **Open Letter on Ending Military Pay Raise Caps**

On behalf of the 100,000 members of the Air Force Sergeants Association, we urge immediate action to end military pay raise caps. Military members (less than one percent of our citizenry) give enough—all too often their very lives if ordered to do so by this nation’s civilian leaders. Reciprocity by those leaders is overdue. Servicemembers keep the faith with this nation; we urge this nation’s leaders to keep faith with them.

What is the impact of capping military pay raises below economic parity? History has shown the net result will be reduced morale, a negative impact on recruiting and retention, and a clear message of a lack of gratitude for servicemembers. Each time this nation’s leaders cut military pay raises and quality-of-life benefits for budget relief, military families also suffer. Every “modest” cut prevents military members and their families from simply keeping pace with the cost of goods and services. Each pay raise cap causes immediate financial harm and compounds in following years. *This is especially egregious for enlisted military members who serve at the bottom of the military pay scales.*

Throughout the 1970s, such pay caps were enacted, resulting in serious retention and readiness deficits. In 1981 and 1982, significant catch-up pay raises were enacted to try to undo the harm of previous government decisions, to re-establish approximate “pay comparability,” and to maintain the success of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF). Unbelievably, after that national leaders continued capping military pay raises over the next decade and a half. By 1999, a 13.5 percent gap had grown between military pay and private sector wages, and the expected problems with recruiting, retention, and readiness ensued.

Over the following years, Congress took action to approve raises one-half percent above private sector wages until it was satisfied that we had finally gotten it right—for military members and for the AVF. Current law calls for annual military pay raises equal to the growth of private sector wages--unless the President calls for cuts based on economic crisis or national emergency. However, Congress can vote to override such Presidential requests. Yet for the past two years legislators have passively acquiesced to the Executive Branch, which has cut military pay raises. Once again, the President is targeting the 2016 military pay raise, urging Congress to cap it a full percent below the formula in law. It is time for Congress to stand up and stop this disturbing trend.

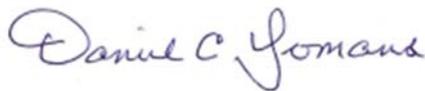
Military members and their families have no unions to speak for them; they must rely on this nation’s leaders. There was a time when these elected officials took pride in supporting those who fight and die for our national interests. Today, however, we see relentless targeting of military pay raises, housing allowances, military commissaries and exchanges, and other benefit programs—all to the detriment of military members, their spouses, and their children. The pay raises called for by the current formula are neither excessive nor unwarranted, they simply enable financial parity for military members.

While military systems, research and development, acquisition, etc., are certainly important to the fulfillment of our defense missions, our nation’s greatest military weapons are the men and women who have the courage, selflessness, and willingness to serve. Without high-quality military members, all other military assets are meaningless. We contend that the priorities of this nation’s leaders are misguided when they fail to provide even the basic support these extraordinary men and women have earned.

To all leaders of the Executive and Legislative branches, we urge you to take action now to restore a 2.3 percent pay raise for January 2016 which is called for by law, and to stop future pay raise caps. Furthermore, steps should be taken to account for previous year caps, to catch up where law has said our military basic pay should be today. We urge you to serve as a champion for the members of our Armed Forces.



ROBERT L. FRANK, CMSgt (ret), USAF  
Chief Executive Officer



DANIEL C. YEOMANS, CMSgt (ret), USAF  
International President