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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0702

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The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

Last June, the Senate adopted unanimously an amendment to the FY2005 National Defense Authorization Act, establishing a program to reimburse soldiers for personal and private expenses incurred to provide critical equipment that the Defense Department had failed to provide for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This amendment was adopted after troubling reports surfaced that our men and women in uniform were digging deep into their own pockets or relying on charitable giving to buy such life-saving gear as bullet proof vests, vehicle armor, and medical supplies. This amendment was modified and adopted in conference as Section 351 of the Defense Authorization Act which was signed by the President into law as Public Law 108-375 on October 28, 2004.

Section 351 requires your office to issue rules on how the Department will expedite the provision of reimbursement to our troops under this section. These rules were required to be issued within 120 days after enactment of this law, or February 25, 2005. To my knowledge, these rules were not promulgated as of February 25th, nor have they been promulgated to date. Accordingly, the office of the Secretary of Defense is apparently not in compliance with this section of the law.

There should be no higher priority for our government than ensuring that American troops are well-equipped, particularly those on the front lines of battle in Iraq and Afghanistan. Given their immense sacrifices, as well as the critical contributions of their families and communities, I hereby request that you immediately inform me as to the status of the Department's action to comply with this statutory requirement.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER J. DODD
United States Senator