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U.S. Rep. Gallagher: Sends letter to Biden on impact of student loan cancellation on military recruitment

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI), Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee's Subcommittee on Military Personnel, today joined Rep. Pat Fallon (R-TX) and 19 other members of the House in sending a letter to President Joe Biden and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin about the impact student loan cancellation will have on military recruitment.

In part, **the members wrote**, *"As you know, some of the most successful recruiting incentives for the military are the GI Bill and student loan forgiveness programs. The idea that the military will pay for schooling during or after completion of a service obligation is a driving factor in many individuals' decision to join one of the services…By forgiving such a wide swath of loans for borrowers, you are removing any leverage the Department of Defense maintained as one of the fastest and easiest ways to pay for higher education."*

The members also specifically asked the following questions:

1. Was the effect on military service considered in the development of the recent student loan forgiveness decision?
2. What is the administration's plan to develop incentives to augment the loss of those who might join the military to help pay off student loans?
3. What improvements are being made to ensure timely payments to those currently enrolled in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness programs for both active duty and reserve components?

Click HERE to see the full letter and list of signers, or read the text below:

Dear President Biden,

We write to you to share our concerns about the unintended consequences of your decision to cancel up to $20,000 of student loan debt per borrower. We are particularly concerned about the negative impact this will surely have on our nation's military and their ability to recruit and retain top talent.

As you know, some of the most successful recruiting incentives for the military are the GI Bill and student loan forgiveness programs. The idea that the military will pay for schooling during or after completion of a service obligation is a driving factor in many individuals' decision to join one of the services. A recent estimate showed that as many as 178,000 servicemembers were eligible for some type of forgiveness.

By forgiving such a wide swath of loans for borrowers, you are removing any leverage the Department of Defense maintained as one of the fastest and easiest ways to pay for higher education. We recognize the loan forgiveness programs have issues of their own, but this remains a top recruiting incentive.

Currently, a mere 23 percent of the population is eligible to serve in the military. Even fewer of those have a propensity to serve. At the end of last month, the Army had only reached 66 percent of its recruiting goal for the year. The Navy, only 89 percent. It is no secret that each of the services continues to battle hardships in recruiting and now these problems will be exacerbated by removing the uniqueness of this benefit.

As the services try to adopt unique approaches to tackle their recruiting challenges, including historic bonuses, it feels like their legs are being cut out from underneath them. With this in mind, we ask for you to provide us answers to the following questions:

1. Was the effect on military service considered in the development of the recent student loan forgiveness decision?

2. What is the administration's plan to develop incentives to augment the loss of those who might join the military to help pay off student loans?

3. What improvements are being made to ensure timely payments to those currently enrolled in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness programs for both active

duty and reserve components?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,