MARY L. LANDRIEU
LOUISIANA

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510–1804

October 8, 2004

The President
The White House
Washington DC, 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to bring a grave injustice to your personal attention. During Senate consideration of the FSC-ETI legislation, the members of the Senate added a modest provision to assist our troops. GAO studies have concluded that 41% of our Guardsmen and Reservists called to serve their country on the front line must take a pay cut to do so. Fortunately, some companies around the country have stepped up to the plate, and taken the patriotic step to make up the pay gap of these brave men and women.

The provision that we added in the Senate would have provided a tax credit of 50% of these costs to companies who make up that difference. In so doing, we hoped both to acknowledge the patriotism of existing companies, and at the same time encourage more employers to take this step.

Mr. President, no doubt that as you have traveled the country, you have confronted the same stories I have from spouses and military families struggling to make ends meet. We have had to ask an awful lot of our Guard and Reserves, and they ask very little from us. So trying to take this worry off the minds of our men and women on the front lines seemed to be the least we can do.

So it is with deep embarrassment for our government that I must report that this very modest relief for our troops was stripped from the conference report by Congressman Thomas and the leadership of the United States House. While I am certain that representatives of your administration participated in this conference, I presume that you did not have personal knowledge of the decision to cut support for our military families.

Regrettably, this decision has placed all of us in a difficult position. While I endorse many aspects of the FSC-ETI bill, but I simply cannot support a measure that places so many lesser priorities ahead of our military families.

Mr. President, I respectfully request that your exert your great influence to correct this injustice. Your willingness to veto this bill, or your insistence that a free standing bill be adopted, could redress this failure. Mr. President our troops need your leadership on this matter. Let us not disappoint them.

Sincerely,

Mary L. Landrieu
United States Senator

James Jeffords
United States Senator

MLL/jdm