Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 11, 2011

The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Max Baucus
The Honorable John Kerry
The Honorable John Kyl
The Honorable Rob Portman
The Honorable Pat Toomey

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling
The Honorable Xavier Becerra
The Honorable Dave Camp
The Honorable Jim Clyburn
The Honorable Fred Upton
The Honorable Chris Van Hollen

Dear Members of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction:

The Berlin Wall fell. The Soviet Union crumbled. The Cold War ended. Yet 20 years later, we continue to spend over $50 billion a year on the U.S. nuclear arsenal. This makes no sense. These funds are a drain on our budget and a disservice to the next generation of Americans. We are robbing the future to pay for the unneeded weapons of the past. Now is the time to stop fighting last century's war. Now is the time to reset our priorities. Now is the time to invest in the people and the programs to get America back on track.

The Super Committee is best positioned to cut this outdated radioactive relic. The Soviets are long gone, yet the stockpiles remain. The bombs collect dust, yet the bills are with us to this day. We call on the Super Committee to cut $20 billion a year, or $200 billion over the next ten years, from the U.S. nuclear weapons budget. This cut will enable us to stay safe without further straining our budget. This cut will improve our security. This cut will allow us to continue funding the national defense programs that matter most.

Consider how this savings compares to vital programs on which Americans rely. We spend approximately $20 billion per year on Pell Grants to help students pay for college. We spend $5 billion to ensure that Americans do not freeze in their homes during the winter. We need to freeze our nuclear weapons, and fuel our stalled economy.

The Ploughshares Fund estimates that the U.S. will spend over $700 billion on nuclear weapons and related programs over the next ten years. Nuclear weapons and missile defense alone will consume over $500 billion. We can no longer justify spending at these levels. We can save hundreds of billions of dollars by restructuring the U.S. nuclear program for the 21st century.

Our current arsenal totals approximately 5,000 nuclear warheads. This enormous stockpile will allow us to annihilate our enemies countless times. At any one time there are up to 12 Trident submarines cruising the world's seas. Each submarine carries an estimated 96 nuclear warheads. Each submarine is capable of destroying all of Russia's and China's major cities. Why then do we need all of these weapons? There is no good reason. America no longer needs, and cannot afford, this massive firepower.

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The Super Committee should not reduce funding to vital programs relied upon by millions of Americans. Cut Minuteman missiles. Do not cut Medicare and Medicaid. Cut nuclear-armed B-52 and B-2 bombers. Do not cut Social Security. Invest in the future, don't waste money on the past. We do not need to maintain our current level of nuclear weapons to secure our country. The President agrees. The Senate agrees. The New START treaty will reduce our level of deployed strategic warheads to 1,550. This is a 25 percent cut from today's levels. Fewer nuclear weapons should equal less funding.

We should not cut entitlement programs first. We should not target our seniors, our children, and our sick first. Instead we should target outdated and unnecessary nuclear weapons. Let's freeze the nukes so we can fund the future.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey

Jan D. Schakowsky

Louise M. Slaughter

Eleanor Holmes Norton

Michael E. Capuano

Pete Stark

Barney Frank

Raul M. Grijalva

Carolyn B. Maloney

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