

Support of defense spending reduction is gaining momentum on the Hill and in one of the country's most prominent newspapers. Less than a week after Representative Ed Markey (D-MA) circulated a letter urging \$200 billion in nuclear weapons spending cuts over the next ten years, a bipartisan group of six representatives is calling for the Super Committee to curb spending on defense programs by billions of dollars.

Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA) is joined by three Democrats--Barney Frank of Massachusetts, Gwen Moore of Wisconsin and Rush Holt of New Jersey--and two Republicans--**John Campbell of California** and Ron Paul of Texas--in a [letter](#) that will circulate on the Hill until Friday, seeking support and signatures.

The letter comes on the heels of Monday's excellent New York Times editorial, which calls for reassessing a defense budget, "ill suited to America's 21st-century military needs."

Echoing both this and Markey's remarks, the representatives noted that U.S. defense spending is based on outdated notions:

The continued reliance on Cold War weaponry and conventional tactics two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union makes little strategic or fiscal sense.

The letter supports reducing the U.S. nuclear stockpile (an idea we lauded last week); auditing the Pentagon to reduce waste, fraud and abuse; and generally reducing defense spending.

Notably, the letter highlights overspending by service contractors, which have been responsible for wasting between \$30 and \$60 billion in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since 2000, the Department of Defense has spent more than \$1.5 trillion dollars on service contractors, with the annual cost to taxpayers nearly tripling. We at POGO, along with Taxpayers for Common Sense (TCS), recommend reducing service contractors by 15 percent, which will save taxpayers at least \$300 billion over the next ten years. Our 15-percent proposal is also supported by the likes of Representative Tom Coburn (R-OK) and Representative Ron Johnson (R-WI).

The letter also points to a number of plans from across the ideological spectrum, drawing on proposals from the Sustainable Defense Task Force, the Simpson-Bowles Commission and Larry Korb, former assistant secretary of defense in the Reagan Administration. POGO and TCS also are asking for sensible cuts to wasteful spending in the budget requests from the Pentagon and other national security budgets that taxpayers simply can't afford.

It's heartening to see a letter that incorporates ideas from across the ideological spectrum, and we thank Lee and the other representatives that have signed on for taking the lead on this critical taxpayer issue. As the Super Committee deadline looms ever closer, we urge lawmakers from both sides of the aisle to join them.