

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN

Dear Friend:

I believe I owe you this letter.

I owe it to you because Congress -- the Congress I serve in -- is engaged in a budgetary shell game that could endanger the lives of your children or, depending on your age, your grandchildren.

What's worse, on its current course, Congress' budget shell game will undermine the war on terrorism and largely gut the Bush Administration's efforts to rebuild our nation's defenses.

Put simply, unless something is done immediately, I fear young Americans will needlessly lose their lives sometime in the not too distant future.

Let me explain what is going on, why I am writing you on behalf of Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW) and why it is absolutely imperative that you complete and return the enclosed CAGW National Defense Readiness Survey today.

Congress recently appropriated billions of dollars to wage the war on terrorism, but billions and billions of Congress' recent appropriations were earmarked for pork-barrel projects that the Pentagon neither wanted or needed. The purpose of these pork-barrel programs is often to help the re-election chances of their Congressional sponsors.

Our men and women in uniform have done a spectacular job in Afghanistan! But unfortunately after the first nine weeks of the conflict, our nation's stockpile of some of our most important high tech weapons was running low.

You would think Congress would be using the Defense Budget to re-equip our fighting men and women. But tragically that's not the case.

As I said on the floor of the Senate, "Even in the middle of a war, a war of monumental consequences and with no end in sight, the Appropriations Committee still is intent on using the Department of Defense as an agency for dispensing corporate welfare."

In one of the greatest rip-offs of taxpayers and the nation's defenses in history, Senators are diverting \$30 billion that could be used to pay for vital weapons, and instead forcing the Air Force to lease 100 of Boeing's 767 airliners and return them 10 years later to the airplane manufacturer, with the U.S. taxpayer paying for conversion to military tankers and reconversion back to civilian airliners.

The Air Force doesn't want or need these planes! It is so bad that my colleague Senator Phil Gramm of Texas called it the worst pork-barrel handout he has seen in his 22 years on Capitol Hill.

This is just one of countless programs that are diverting defense dollars from the war on terrorism, weapons, training and retention of our military's best to pet projects of Congressmen and Senators back home. These rip-offs are making America weaker!

Unless we change Congress' course, if your children, grandchildren or any of their loved ones volunteer or are drafted into the Armed Forces, they may be forced to fly in planes that could be