

## Senators Urge Panetta to Lift DoD Staffing Caps

BY STEPHEN LOSEY | JULY 12, 2011

Some Democratic senators are pushing new Defense Secretary Leon Panetta to lift caps on the number of civilian employees at the department.

Panetta's predecessor, Robert Gates, issued a memo last August freezing staffing at the Office of the Secretary of Defense, combatant commands and other Defense agencies as part of a major efficiency plan. But Sens. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md., and four other senators told Panetta in a July 7 letter that capping staffing at fiscal 2010 levels is "arbitrary" and would force the department to contract out new work.

This would lead to inherently governmental work, which should be handled by federal employees, being done by contractors, the lawmakers said.

"Certain federal jobs — like reviewing contracts, making budgets and writing policies — are simply too important to agencies' missions to ever be contracted out," the senators said.

Mikulski and the others who signed the letter — Tom Harkin of Iowa, Claire McCaskill of Missouri, Patty Murray of Washington, and Sherrod Brown of Ohio — said Defense should manage its workforce based on cost instead of headcounts of civilian employees.

McCaskill in a news release said Defense should instead cut waste from service contracts and poor acquisition practices.