



MOLLY JOSEPH WARD, CHAIR • KENNETH I. WRIGHT, VICE CHAIR • E. DANA DICKENS III, TREASURER • DWIGHT L. FARMER, SECRETARY

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To the Editor:

Sequestration. Not a term that any of us use in our daily conversations, and many perhaps have never heard the term at all until recently. But the time is approaching when all of us who call Hampton Roads home will become all-too-familiar with this arcane term, for its impact will be unpleasant for us all.

So how did we get here? When the Congress voted to increase the national debt limit in the summer of 2011, a "Super Committee" was formed to find \$1.2 trillion (with a "T") in spending reductions and/or revenue increases in the Federal budget. That Super Committee could not agree on a path forward, so automatic spending cuts of that amount will begin to take effect in January 2013 – roughly \$100 Billion each year for 10 years - with half of the money coming from national security (Defense, Homeland Security, State, etc.) and the other half from all other Federal agencies. But this is no normal spending cut; this sequestration allows little discretion, forces no hard choices on priorities. All accounts and line items in the Federal agencies affected – with most having a significant presence in Hampton Roads – will take an across-the-board reduction. By this summer, private sector companies will begin layoffs in preparation for this, and nine months from now that sequestration will begin in earnest and start to be felt across our region. The impact on national security, our warfighters and our regional economy cannot be overstated. The Federal presence in Hampton Roads contributes billions of dollars to our economy, and provides jobs to tens of thousands of us.

So what can you do about it? First, be aware. We are all bombarded by too much news and information in our busy lives, and it's difficult to separate the urgent from the important. I assure you, this is important AND urgent. Second, let your voice be heard. On May 14, Congressman Randy Forbes and others from the Congress will be holding a listening session at 6:30 p.m. at the Chesapeake Conference Center. Reserve your spot here: <http://defendingourdefenders.eventbrite.com> . Whether you're a business owner large or small, a veteran or retiree, or just a concerned citizen, your voice will be heard. But don't stop there. After attending, contact your elected leaders in the House and Senate and demand that sequestration be rolled back – now, not following the Presidential election in a lame-duck session. This is an issue that will negatively affect the security of the United States, and doing nothing will simply insure that it happens.

Craig R. Quigley  
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)  
Executive Director  
Hampton Roads Military and Federal Facilities Alliance

