

## Sound Bites

*"I promised in my first message as secretary that I will fight for you. That means I will fight for you and your families as we face these budget challenges."*

— Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta wrote in an Aug. 3 message to the Defense Department workforce. Panetta acknowledged that with the country's current financial situation, cuts in defense spending must and will be part of the solution to the national financial struggle, but added that budget reductions must take sound strategy and policy into account.



Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta responds to a question from the audience during a televised conversation with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C., on Aug. 16, 2011. DoD photo by Tech. Sgt. Jacob N. Bailey, U.S. Air Force.

*"Taking money from people who stay while paying more to people who leave. What a concept! If we'd had this system in place for the past decade of war, we wouldn't have enough people left to deploy."*

—Col. Steven P. Strobbridge, USAF-Ret., Director of Government Relations of the Military Officers Association of America, speaking during an Aug. 17 online chat hosted by *The Washington Post* concerning the proposed changes to military retirement benefits and how they may affect military families. Proposed changes include delaying eligibility for full retired pay until a certain age and providing a vesting option to service members who leave before serving 20 years. Defense Department officials have recently said that the military retirement system will not change anytime soon. The Mil Life is an ongoing chat series the *Post* hosts every Wednesday at noon ET at <http://live.washingtonpost.com>.

*"We're paying attention to this issue and are encouraging state leaders to make it easier for military spouses to transfer their licenses between states. The goal here is for all 50 states to hear this message and take action — to make your transitions easier."*

— Brad Cooper is Executive Director of Joining Forces in the Office of the First Lady. Joining Forces is a comprehensive national initiative to mobilize all sectors of society to give service members and their families the opportunities and support they have earned. Visit [www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces](http://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces) for more information about the initiative, launched earlier this year by First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden.

*"There is nothing that gives the USO more joy than making the lives of military families a little easier and lightening their load ... Relocating to a new place can be difficult for everyone, but especially for military families with young children. That is why this tour is SO important and why we proudly stand beside Sesame Workshop to deliver a show that is entertaining and helpful to the children of those who serve."*

— Sloan Gibson, USO President, speaking about this year's fifth installment of The Sesame Street/USO Experience for Military Families — a free traveling USO tour exclusively for military families based on Sesame Workshop's award winning Talk, Listen, Connect (TLC) initiative. Since the tour's inception four years ago, The Sesame Street/USO Experience for Military Families has logged more than 61,200 miles to 90 bases in 33 different states and nine countries. Visit [www.sesameworkshop.org](http://www.sesameworkshop.org) for more information.

*"People think that we in the Federal government have this protective fence around us; that we're immune to the needs of people in our communities. But we know that the need is great. We have people in our families who are out of jobs or who have debilitating diseases. In our everyday jobs, we are doing things to help the American people...I see our giving — our enthusiastic giving — as an extension of this service."*

— Linda Washington, Chair of the Local Federal Coordinating Committee for the Combined Federal Campaign's National Capital Area. For more information on the 2011 CFC —which celebrates 50 years of giving — see our package starting on page 28.