Dear Senator :

I write in the hope that you will help restore funds to Stars and Stripes. The proposed defense budget you are working on now contains no funds for Stripes. Nothing. The $15.5 million Stripes received last year was zeroed out, effectively dealing a fatal blow to this venerable organization whose roots date to the Civil War.

Hard to believe that Stars and Stripes no longer has the support of its government.

More than 1.4 million people access Stripes news and information every day in print, on the web, tablet or mobile phone, and in enewsletters, video, podcast and social media. Thousands of military men and women and their families count on it. For generations, Stars and Stripes has been their hometown paper while they served overseas.

Now, unless funding is restored, Stripes will be devastated, its mission silenced.

There is some urgency to this request. DoD has said it will no longer provide appropriated funds to Stripes after September 30, and DMA has declined to approve Stripes’ tenancy agreement for its central office in Judiciary Square. DMA has even gone so far as to dismantle journalism operations, such as telling the Army and Navy to cancel Stripes’ military reporter billets.

Government funding accounts for half of Stripes’ budget. Faced with the prospect of no government funding, Publisher Max Lederer has begun planning for the worst. Many of the operational changes he will have to make are not reversible. Delivery will be slashed, facilities closed, troops downrange and in remote regions won’t be served – regions such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Djibouti, and all of Eastern Europe.

This does not have to happen. Congress should restore the funds at the current level to keep Stripes on its mission through 2021, and then direct the secretary of defense to conduct a study to determine whether Stripes should be reassigned to another agency. DMA and Stripes have never been a perfect fit. Their missions clash. Talks had been under way between Stripes and DMA about conducting the study, but it was never done. Instead, DoD and DMA orphaned Stripes by defunding it. Congress can restore the funds and order the study.

We need your help, and so do the men and women around the world who count on Stripes every day.

Thank you for considering this request.

Cordially,