

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 6, 2015

The Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Secretary Mabus,

In July, you made the historic decision to extend maternity leave for women serving in the Navy and the Marine Corps. As members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, we write today to commend your decision that is vitally important to our sailors and Marines and their families. We are hopeful that other services will follow your lead.

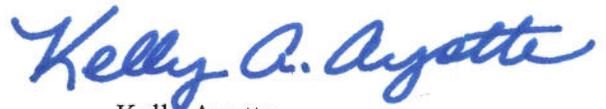
As you know, studies have shown that providing women with sufficient maternity leave is better for the health of both the mother and the child. In addition, experience from the private sector has shown that when employers extend maternity leave they are successful in retaining more women. The attrition rate for women in the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the other services is simply too high. The military services are losing experienced and talented women and the leadership that they could provide in the years ahead. By embracing policies that are more family-friendly, the Navy and Marine Corps may be taking a critical step forward in tackling the issue of female retention in the military.

We care deeply about those who have volunteered to defend our nation, and it is our responsibility to ensure we promote the policies that will set them up to succeed in their mission. This new policy is an acknowledgement that providing greater flexibility to new mothers on the front end will pay dividends in the years to come. The Department of the Navy is taking an important step in building a stronger Navy and Marine Corps. We applaud your decision to recognize the importance of strong maternity leave policies to the retention of our talented sailors and Marines.

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill
United States Senator



Kelly Ayotte
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator