

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 27, 2018

Her Excellency Angela Merkel
Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany
Bundeskanzleramt
Willy-Brandt-Straße 1
10557 Berlin, Germany

Dear Chancellor Merkel:

On behalf of the United States Senate, we would like to welcome you to Washington, D.C. With so many threats to peace and stability, we are thankful for the robust partnership between our nations. Our alliance is strengthened by our shared values and respect for individual freedom, and we look forward to continuing to strengthen the ties between our nations.

There is no greater sacrifice than sending our sons and daughters into harm's way in the defense of freedom. Germany's involvement is welcome and continues to be vital to NATO's success. We greatly appreciate Germany's continued contributions to NATO missions and operations, including Resolute Support Mission, enhanced Forward Presence, Kosovo Force, the NATO Response Force, Operation Sea Guardian, and many others.

In Congress, there is broad bipartisan appreciation for the critical role that Germany plays in hosting approximately 35,000 U.S. military personnel and several key facilities. The United States is dedicated to helping deter and to defend against the real and growing threats that our nations face. Given the rise of Russian aggression, violent extremism, and other threats, a strong NATO alliance is essential.

As the United States is devoting more resources to the defense of Europe, we also want to ensure the strength of our allied forces. We are therefore concerned by the recent Annual Report released by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces in Germany, which indicates that the German armed forces suffer from significant problems with manning and readiness. The report urges a doubling of effort on reforms and an increase in defense spending. As a close ally whose armed forces serve side by side with German forces, we hope your government will seek sufficient defense expenditures to address these urgent issues.

We appreciate Germany's increase in defense expenditures up to an estimated 1.24% in 2017. However, we believe it is crucial that Germany provide a plan for how you intend to meet your Wales commitment to contribute 2% of GDP to defense by 2024, to which you and Defense Minister von der Leven agreed. Given Germany's political leadership and strong economic growth, announcing such a plan in advance of the next NATO Summit in July would make a major statement to the rest of the alliance – and to the world – about the measure of our resolve.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to discussing these and other issues with you during your visit.

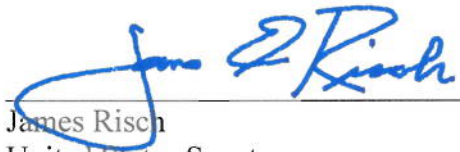
Sincerely,



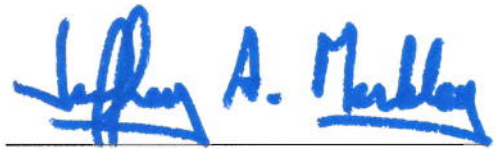
Ron Johnson
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



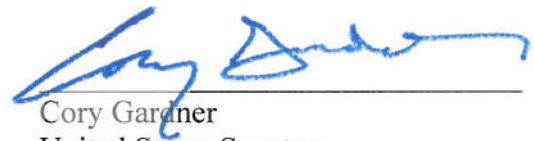
James Risch
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Cory Gardner
United States Senator



John Barrasso
United States Senator