



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-3605

January 9, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

President Biden:

We write to you today to share our tremendous concerns and disappointment regarding the delayed notification of Secretary Lloyd Austin's recent hospitalization. This failure to notify the proper officials is an extraordinary breach of protocol, and at most, dereliction of duty.

It is unacceptable and unconscionable that the principal cabinet member responsible for U.S. national security would be absent without notice of leave, designating an alternative chain of command, or making relevant Members of Congress and the Executive Branch aware of such an absence. At a time of significant global instability as Ukraine defends itself against Russia and a regional conflict continues in the Middle East, it is dangerous, reckless, and beyond concerning that the individual you have designated to lead our men and women in uniform does not follow the proper protocol when undergoing surgery.

Secretary Austin's duties require his availability at a moment's notice to respond to potential national security crises. We believe Secretary Austin's blatant violation of the Pentagon's Principles of Information<sup>1</sup> and serious lapse in judgment warrants his immediate resignation, as well as the resignation of any staff involved in covering up his hospitalization. If he does not resign, he should be immediately dismissed. As former military pilots from both the United States Navy and United States Air Force, we request that you respond to the following questions by January 23, 2023:

- To what extent was Secretary Austin incapacitated during his surgery?

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Defense (n.d.). *Principles of Information*. Defense.gov.  
<https://www.defense.gov/Resources/Principles-of-Information/>

- At what point did he place his deputy, Kathleen Hicks, in command and were any key national security decisions made during his absence? To what extent was Secretary Austin involved in decision-making processes?
- When did Secretary Austin notify the President, Congress, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the National Security Council, and other necessary military members to ensure that our military's chain of command was intact should there have been an emergency?
- What specific disciplinary action, if any, will Secretary Austin and any staff members who failed to meet the standards of public disclosure for senior government officials unable to exercise their duties?

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. Please contact my office to assist in scheduling this request by phone at 202-225-3605 or by email at [David.Horsley@mail.house.gov](mailto:David.Horsley@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,



August Pfluger  
Member of Congress



Jake Ellzey  
Member of Congress



Mike Garcia  
Member of Congress



Scott Franklin  
Member of Congress