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August 1, 2005

Mr. Anthony Principi
2524 S. Clark St.
Suite 600
Arlington, Virginia 22202

BRAC Commission

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Dear Mr. Principi:

Thank you for contacting me regarding authority granted to the Bush Administration to conduct a round of base closures in 2005. I appreciate hearing from you and having the benefit of your views. I recognize the important role played by the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base (NASJRB) at Willow Grove, Pennsylvania in addressing our national security objectives, and please know of my support for the personnel and the work they perform in helping to defend the freedoms we cherish.

In the "Report of the Department of Defense on Base Realignment and Closure," released in 1998, then-Secretary of Defense William Cohen concluded that, after four previous rounds of closure by the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission, our nation's military continues to operate more military infrastructure than it requires. Briefly, this report indicated that the Department of Defense (DoD) overestimated costs associated with closures of these installations while underestimating the resulting savings.

As you are aware, included in S. 1438, the Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 National Defense Authorization Act, were provisions authorizing the next BRAC round to take place in 2005. On December 28, 2001, President Bush signed S. 1438 into federal law [P.L. 107-107].

Marking the beginning of the fifth round of base closings since 1988, DoD released its draft criteria for the 2005 BRAC round on December 23, 2003 in accordance with current law. A period of public comment on the criteria ended January 28, 2004. As you may know, during the 30-day public comment period, DoD received over 200 letters from Members of Congress and community leaders.

On February 12, 2004, DoD released its final criteria that will guide the BRAC 2005 process. When selecting military installations for closure or realignment, DoD will consider the military value of each base. The military value includes the current and future mission capabilities, and the impact on operational readiness of DoD's total force as well as the availability of land facilities and associated airspace. Additionally, the criteria include the base's ability to accommodate contingency, mobilization, and future total force requirements at both existing and potential receiving locations. DoD will also take into consideration the economic impact on existing communities in the vicinity of military installations, the environmental impact of each

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I am disappointed to see NASJRB Willow Grove recommended for closure on the BRAC list released by the DoD. Although this installation is on the list for closure, it is important to remember that this is just the beginning of the BRAC process. The BRAC Commission will review the recommendations submitted by DoD and will send its recommendations to President Bush by September of 2005. Please know that I will work hard with Governor Rendell and the Pennsylvania delegation to work with the BRAC Commissioners and to be a strong advocate for NASJRB Willow Grove.

Thank you again for contacting me. Please know that I appreciate all of the hard work of the military and civilian employees at each of Pennsylvania's military installations, and that I will continue to be active in the ongoing BRAC process. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call on me again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Santorum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R" at the beginning.

Rick Santorum
United States Senate

RJS: