

[H.A.S.C. No. 118-69]

MEMBER DAY

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

HEARING HELD
APRIL 11, 2024



U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

57-567

WASHINGTON : 2025

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ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

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MEMBER DAY

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Thursday, April 11, 2024.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 9:00 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Mike Rogers [chairman of the committee] presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE ROGERS, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM ALABAMA, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order. Welcome to our House Armed Services Committee (HASC) Member Day and thank you for taking time to be here today. We look forward to hearing from you all on your priorities for the fiscal year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act.

In addition to testimony provided today, several Members have submitted statements for the record. I ask unanimous consent that all Members' written statements be made part of the record. Without objection, so ordered.

The committee will recognize Members giving statement one at a time in order that they arrive. We limit the testimony to four minutes today, but we will enter full remarks into the record.

Thank you all for being here today. With that, I yield to the Ranking Member for any opening statement he may have.

STATEMENT OF HON. ADAM SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM WASHINGTON, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. SMITH. Just that I thank the Members for coming. This process of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and the Armed Services Committee is for the whole House. So, we work with Members, you know, regardless of if you are on the committee or not. We understand you have equities interests in our national security and oversight of Department of Defense (DOD), and we always look forward to getting those contributions and incorporating them into the product. So, we look forward to hearing your ideas.

And with that, I will yield back to the chair.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the Ranking Member.

The chair will now recognize our first witness, Mr. Moore of Utah. You are recognized.

STATEMENT OF HON. BLAKE MOORE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF UTAH

Mr. MOORE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

To both of you, it is excellent and a great experience to be back in your committee room today. Many good experiences here and I appreciate the work that you all do, as you navigate tumultuous waters and continue to find a way to build our armed services. Sincerely, both when I was on committee as off, it is still just as dedicated to serving that same cause. So, sincerely, thank you for what you do.

As a former member of this committee, I am honored to have the opportunity to testify on this year's defense priorities for the 1st District of Utah and the over 28,000 uniformed and civilian airmen and workers of Hill Air Force Base, whom I represent in Congress.

Because it has the rare privilege of being both an operational active-duty installation with combat-ready F-35 aircraft, while also hosting a major civilian workforce, Hill Air Force Base serves multiple mission sets that will be crucial to the warfighter during a potential peer conflict scenario in the Indo-Pacific.

As more F-35s become operational, opening more hangar space in the Ogden Air Logistics Complex at Hill to maintain these fighters will be critical to the future of U.S. air superiority. However, critical resources, technical expertise, and man-hours are pulled away from the F-35 program every day to maintain legacy aircraft, such as the A-10, that do not fit modern-day operational relevance.

I have worked with committee members and staff on base text language that would require the Air Force to go through an annual briefing exercise to determine where A-10 divestiture delays are occurring, their strategy for maintaining an aggressive timeline, and how to transition civilian maintainers towards the F-35 program.

However, organic depot performance is also driven by access to talent. I'm deeply concerned about the DOD's inability to hire qualified and skilled military members shortly after they retire and how this impacts the overall readiness of our armed forces.

I have supported language both on and off the Armed Services Committee that would repeal the existing 180-day waiting period that a military retiree must complete until he or she can enter a civilian job with the DOD. And today, I would like to again emphasize how important this change is, as this committee drafts and considers our next NDAA.

At a time when our depots, arsenals, and shipyards struggle to keep up with the brutally competitive hiring environments for the private sector, the federal government needs access to candidates who possess active security clearances and the specialized skills required to support our national security priorities.

Hill Air Force Base and all of Utah is honored to be the home of the 388th Fighter Wing, the Air Force's first combat-coded, fifth-generation fighter unit. When I speak to the leadership at Hill, they remind me that F-35 aircraft have not consistently been accompanied by equally modern, fifth-generation weaponry and sensory equipment, which could gravely impact national security in a conflict scenario.

I look forward to working with members of this committee to include the language in the NDAA that would require Air Force to develop an annual service-wide planning initiative to quickly im-

plement fifth-generation weapons into the F-35 program and a strategy for any needed policy changes to accomplish this.

Additionally, Hill Air Force Base and surrounding defense partners are rightfully proud of their work developing the LGM-35A Sentinel Program, which will replace our aging Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles and bring nearly 4,000 jobs to northern Utah.

Utahans know that the foundation of strategic deterrence and the protection of the American homeland is a credible nuclear force, which is why supporting the Sentinel Program remains so crucial, given the unstable geopolitical environment we find ourselves in today. I remain a steadfast advocate for the program and look forward to working with committee members to ensure its delivery.

Lastly, I would be remiss not to mention the major quality-of-life challenges currently facing military servicemembers in my district. Fueled by pandemic population shift and DOD programs at Hill, housing costs in northern Utah have exploded, rising by 27 percent in 2021 alone. At the same time, military construction (MILCON) backlog and military dormitory crisis remains a preeminent issue, meaning that lower enlisted airmen are being forced off base to seek housing they cannot afford.

I have worked with committee members to craft language requiring the Comptroller General of the United States to access alternate locality pay formulations that more appropriately reflect changes to the cost of living, the cost of housing, and other factors impacting civilian and uniformed servicemembers to the Department of Defense and the Veteran Affairs (VA).

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify. I look forward to working with your teams in securing these priorities in this year's NDAA. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Moore can be found in the Appendix on page 17.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Moore.

Mr. Stanton, you are recognized.

STATEMENT OF HON. GREG STANTON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Mr. STANTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, members of this committee, thank you so much for the opportunity to testify today about my priorities and concerns, as the Representative for Arizona's 4th Congressional District. As you work on crafting this year's NDAA, I ask you to keep in mind the issues that will have an impact on those constituents.

Our defense sector is a huge source of pride in Arizona. We play a vital role in the national security for all Americans. Arizona has experts in innovation, technology, manufacturing, and the defense industry supplies a great number of jobs for my district and state. Overall, the defense industry has an economic impact of \$19 billion, equating to 80,000 jobs. So, I ask you to continue to invest in these innovative technologies and production manufacturing.

One of my top priorities before this committee is to finally bring justice to Arizona's downwinders. Downwinders is a term for people

who were downwind of radioactive pollution for more than 200 weapons tests done in Arizona between 1945 and 1962.

My bill, House Resolution (H.R.) 4754, the Downwinders Parity Act, would extend the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act to communities in northern Arizona and southern Nevada who were exposed to cancer-causing radiation from atomic weapons testing.

We, as partners in the federal government, have responsibility to make amends to downwinders and miners who were exposed to radiation, but I am profoundly disappointed that the bipartisan effort to extend Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) and expand it to Arizonans was stripped from the final NDAA bill last year. And I implore HASC to include RECA as part of this year's NDAA, and welcome the opportunity to support Representatives Vasquez and Moylan in their efforts on this committee.

Radioactive fallout doesn't adhere to state boundaries. It is imperative that we expand eligibility to all impacted parties, and I hope the expansion will be included in this year's bill.

As the committee knows, Arizona is getting warmer. Last year, the State's capital of Phoenix had 133 days with temperatures at or above 100 degrees. That is harmful to anyone, but those on our military installations can face even higher levels of danger.

The Marine Corps station in Yuma, Arizona, right on the border, is one of the country's hottest military bases. The heat impacts our recruiting ability and our service readiness. In fact, almost 3,000 troops experienced heat-related illness last year, a number that has grown 50 percent in five years. As you craft this critical bill, I ask you to think of weatherizing our defense infrastructure and consider innovations to keep our military men and women cool and safe.

Finally, I want to touch on the importance of keeping Arizona's/America's data safe. Right now, the DOD purchases many of its computers and printers from manufacturers in China. Healthy trade and global consumerism are important. Yet, as we focus on building our own business and nearshoring our own technologies, we need to think of the implications of procurement from our strategic competitors.

This is not just in weapons and manufacturing, but in personnel equipment. Other agencies have prohibited the purchase of goods from select companies, starting back in 2007, believing procuring personnel equipment from a competitor in this way could be a national security risk. America's defense systems have some of the most sensitive information in the world, especially now. As we invest in American semiconductor manufacturing initiatives, I ask you to consider data sensitivity as you craft this year's NDAA.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, for allowing me to speak at this Member Day. I appreciate your great leadership and your attention to these important issues. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Stanton can be found in the Appendix on page 19.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Stanton.
Mr. Kilmer, you are recognized.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DEREK KILMER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WASHINGTON**

Mr. KILMER. Thank you, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith, for holding this hearing today.

I'm here to discuss three of my legislative priorities focused on improving infrastructure in and around military installations, affordable housing for our Nation's veterans and servicemembers, and lastly, maternal health care for our servicemembers and their families.

First, I want to touch on the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program and the Defense Community Infrastructure Program. I represent Washington State's 6th Congressional District, home to Naval Base Kitsap in Bremerton. Kitsap is home to one of the Navy's four public shipyards, the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility. Puget Sound Naval Shipyard (PSNS) plays an outsized role for the Department of Defense's current priority feeder Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM), in that it is the Navy's only dry dock on the West Coast capable of performing carrier maintenance.

As you know, in 2018, the Navy released its 20-year Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program, or SIOP, to revitalize and modernize infrastructure at the shipyards, increase climate resilience, and improve resistance to natural disasters. The timely execution of SIOP is vital to the Navy's mission, to the security of the work being done in the yards, and to our national security. Any delays or shortfalls in funding for SIOP could result in additional deterioration and damage to the already substandard facilities, utilities, dry docks, equipment, and information technology infrastructure at our public shipyards. PSNS has already faced seismic mitigation needs, and without robust funding, our shipyards will be unable to meet current and future demands of the fleet.

Additionally, the Defense Community Infrastructure Program, DCIP, was created in 2019 to help communities around military installations address infrastructure deficiencies. It is a unique program because it allows the Department of Defense to partner with local communities and share the often expensive costs of infrastructure upgrades.

So, I appreciate your consideration of my request to prioritize funding for the SIOP, including continued seismic mitigation efforts, and my request for authorizing \$100 million for the Defense Community Infrastructure Program to grow this important program.

Second, I want to bring the VALID Act to your attention. The VALID Act is bipartisan/bicameral and focuses on affordable housing, specifically, for our Nation's veterans. One important way we can honor their sacrifice is by ensuring those who served can achieve their dream of one day owning a home. VA Home Loans can offer veterans, active duty servicemembers, reservists, and guard members advantages over other loan options, including lower down payments, more favorable interest rates, and lower closing costs—often saving tens of thousands of dollars over the life of the loan.

Unfortunately, despite these benefits, overall usage of the VA Home Loan Program is surprisingly low. Providing a simple update

to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's existing informed consumer choice disclosure notice will help close that loop and ensure veterans and servicemembers are aware of their hard-earned VA Home Loan benefit. Specifically, the bill would add VA Home Loans to the current disclosure form lenders provide to prospective homebuyers, which, right now, only compares conventional and Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loan options.

Several members of your committee have sponsored the bill, and it is supported by stakeholder organizations, including the Veterans Association of Real Estate Professionals, Veterans United Home Loans, the Military Officers Association of America, the National Association of Realtors, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

Lastly, I plan to introduce the Midwives for Servicemembers Act of 2024. This legislation would direct the DOD to develop and establish a five-year demonstration project designed to evaluate the cost, quality of care, and impact on maternal and fetal outcomes of using Certified Professional Midwives and Certified Midwives under the TRICARE program.

Like the Doula and Lactation Counselors Pilot Program in the fiscal year 2021 NDAA, this bill aims to expand health care access, including in districts like mine, which is becoming a maternity care desert after the Labor and Delivery Unit at Naval Hospital Bremerton closed. We need to expand and increase the quality of and access to maternal care nationwide.

So, thank you for your time. Thank you for your leadership on these issues. I look forward to working with you to move these critical pieces of legislation forward.

And I yield back. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Kilmer can be found in the Appendix on page 22.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Kilmer.

Mr. McGovern, you are recognized.

STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS

Ms. MCGOVERN. Thank you very much, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith, for giving me the opportunity to talk to you about one of my priorities for the fiscal year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act.

The Wounded Warrior Service Dog Program was created as a \$1 million pilot program in the fiscal year 2015 defense appropriations bill and has seen consistent bipartisan support to increase funding to its current level of \$16 million for fiscal year 2024.

I want to thank this committee for recognizing the success of the program in 2020 by including the amendment that I filed with the late Representative Jackie Walorski in a bipartisan en bloc amendment, which established the Wounded Warrior Service Dog Program as a program of record in the fiscal year 2021 NDAA.

Regrettably, the program shifted its primary purpose in 2023. It is no longer a competitive grant program that provides resources for nonprofits to increase capacity to raise, train, and place service dogs with eligible veterans and servicemembers. Instead, the primary goal now is to research standards for raising service dogs.

The new guidelines for organizations applying for funding do not even consider if the award would increase capacity to place service dogs with veterans.

As you well know, so many of our servicemembers and veterans return home from the battlefield suffering from post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and other mental and physical disabilities.

Over the past decade, I have had the opportunity to spend time at the National Education for Assistance Dogs Services, or NEADS, which is located in Princeton, Massachusetts. Like similar nonprofits, NEADS customizes each dog's training to serve its future owner. Dogs can be trained to retrieve medicine from a refrigerator; turn the lights on; scan an empty house before the owner enters; guard an owner's back in a public setting, and even wake up an owner from a nightmare.

I have had countless conversations with constituents and other veterans around the country who tell me that having a service dog on their support team has saved their lives. They tell me about how it helped them reintegrate into the social framework of their families and communities, and often, reduces their reliance on prescription drugs.

So today, I'm here to ask the committee to include the text of the bipartisan amendment I submitted last year with Representatives Fitzpatrick, LaLota, D'Esposito, and Garbarino that was included in the House-passed 2024 NDAA, which would clarify the congressional intent of establishing the Wounded Warriors Service Dog Program. Rather than repurposing these resources, let's get back to supporting these highly technical nonprofits, so they can continue to do what they do best—help our veterans.

Again, thank you, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith, for your attention.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McGovern can be found in the Appendix on page 27.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. McGovern.

And, Mr. James, you are recognized.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN JAMES, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MICHIGAN**

Mr. JAMES. Thank you, Chairman Rogers. I appreciate your time and this opportunity to address you.

As I did last year, I'm here again to advocate for Selfridge Air National Guard Base. Selfridge is home to the 127th Wing, houses the A-10s and the KC-135 tankers—with both missions being divested in 2027 and 2029, respectively.

We welcome a new KC-46A mission that will come in a few years, but Selfridge is a fighter base. It has been for over a century.

Selfridge, the jewel of southeast Michigan, is located next to Lake St. Clair and in the Great Lakes Region—a northern border that provides critical security, not just for the United States, but our allies to the north. It is most critical that the assets, our most critical assets—the men and women on the ground—are protected.

This great wing includes six Weapons School graduates, Top Gun equivalent for the Air Force, and many other pilots, maintainers,

and hundreds of jobs in the area, on the base, and in the region that would be lost if we do not replace our fighter mission.

These are things that are difficult to come by. Yet, despite the Michigan's delegation's best efforts to secure a future fighter mission for Selfridge, it has alluded us. Through the work of our Governor, our Senators, our House Members, and our community, we are confident that we can welcome an F-15EX mission or an F-35 mission to southeast Michigan—for a state that has lost three fighter missions in as many decades; for a state that feels left behind and disinvested, and for a state that has outsized capacity and ability to fight and win our Nation's wars, along with fighters. Selfridge is a prime location to host future armed reconnaissance platforms. I, personally, can account for that, as a former Apache pilot myself.

Following the Army's cancellation of the Future Attack Reconnaissance Aircraft (FARA) program, I hope that the Army considers stationing manned attack aircraft in the form of Apache 64E models at the Army National Guard, Michigan. My hope is that, in this NDAA, we can help the Army consider a future attack aircraft mission, because we formally had Cobras before 9/11 in Michigan. Again, Michigan is outsized and has an outsized role in defense of this Nation, and we have a legacy of attack and fighter missions.

What we have done so far, we have advocated for fleet leveling, the process in which the Air Force would temporarily recapitalize its fighters, like the A-10. Unfortunately, this idea has received significant pushback from the Air Force—leaving us with little other options but to seek action in this NDAA.

We have advocated for increasing capacity for advanced fighter production. I am concerned that the Air Force is cancelling the F-15EX production starting next year, when this is the only other platform available to Joint Strike Fighter.

Our Governor and I don't always agree, but what we do agree about is the importance of Selfridge. She has worked well with our state legislature and our delegation, and has transmitted significant investment in Selfridge in order to enable us to bring a fighter mission to Selfridge.

As this committee formulates the fiscal year 2025 NDAA, it is critical that Congress enact a fighter recapitalization policy that will maintain 25 fighter wings across the National Guard, to include Selfridge. Congress has a vital role to ensure that our total force maintains its critical strategic assets to remain competitive with China and future pacing threats.

Lastly, as the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, I want to advocate for supporting the critical mission that Africa Command (AFRICOM) is doing on the continent by requesting funding for Somalia persistent presence, high-risk ISR, Enterprise Command and Control (C2) Resiliency, and Commercial Satellite Communications.

Along with these priorities, I hope the committee considers supporting AFRICOM's objectives with the Combined Joint Interagency Coordination Group, West Africa. These priorities will help stem the threats coming from Russia and China and terrorist organizations like Al-Shabaab. We are seeing China considering build-

ing a naval base in West Africa, which presents a direct threat to the United States, given its strategic location in the Atlantic.

I would appreciate your feedback, Mr. Chairman, and I hope your team can connect with mine on these critical matters to Michigan and to our Nation.

Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. James can be found in the Appendix on page 28.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. James.

Ms. Budzinski, you are recognized.

I don't think your microphone is on.

STATEMENT OF HON. NICOLE "NIKKI" BUDZINSKI, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

Ms. BUDZINSKI. Sorry.

The CHAIRMAN. There you go.

Ms. BUDZINSKI. Thank you very much. That helps.

Good morning, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony before the House Armed Services Committee as a part of the fiscal year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act, NDAA, Member Day.

I'm here today to advocate for the inclusion of a bipartisan initiative focused on the safety of our military members and in support of domestic manufacturing. This bipartisan provision, crafted in partnership with House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bost, has two major aims.

The first is that it will require the Department of Defense to issue regulations to the Department of Army to ensure all boots are Berry Amendment-compliant and meet the highest quality and performance standards. Our troops deserve to have the best quality military equipment and uniforms to support the rigors of training and deployment.

The second aim of this provision is to improve our domestic industrial supply base by requiring boots be American-made and that all materials in the supply chain are American-sourced. Over the past several years, there has been a concerning influx of poorly made, non-Berry-compliant, and foreign-sourced footwear targeted at the United States Army.

Army Regulation 670-1 was created to ensure that garments and equipment worn by our soldiers meet certain appearance and quality standards, and to make sure equipment could withstand severe conditions. However, over time, the market for Army soldier footwear has been taken over by foreign manufacturers—to the point where much of the Army footwear we see today only have the appearance of Army Regulation (AR) 670 design, but do not meet the performance or quality standards. This means current Army uniform regulations allow soldiers to purchase foreign-made combat boots that pose a significant safety threat to them and their fellow soldiers.

Ensuring American-sourced and -made boots are worn by our military is not a novel idea. In fact, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps require their servicemembers wear American-made boots at all times. It is past time we require the same for the Department of the Army.

I thank Congressman Chairman Bost for his partnership on this important provision, and I ask that the committee support its inclusion and passage in this year's National Defense Authorization Act.

Thank you again for this opportunity to submit testimony, and I look forward to working with you on these important issues.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Budzinski can be found in the Appendix on page 30.]

The CHAIRMAN. We thank you.

And the chair now recognizes Representative Gluesenkamp Perez.

STATEMENT OF HON. MARIE PEREZ, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

Ms. PEREZ. Thank you, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith, for the opportunity to testify today.

I am here to advocate for the inclusion of certain provisions of my bipartisan bill, the PARA-Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Act, which I introduced with Congressman Finstad in the fiscal year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act.

Our servicemembers who completed military emergency medical technical training while serving have an incredible skill set that should be celebrated and utilized as they transition to the civilian from the Armed Forces. We can better serve both those transitioning servicemembers as well as our rural communities by making it easier for experienced veterans to transition from medics to becoming Certified Civilian Paramedic and EMT.

This provision would create a program for states to facilitate and expedite the transition of medics coming out of the military to meet certification, licensure, and other requirements applicable to becoming an EMT or a paramedic. This will support the recruitment of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) staff in rural areas like mine; cut red tape for veterans looking to build on their service to their country by becoming a Certified EMT or paramedic.

I appreciate Representative Finstad's partnership to support rural first responders and strengthen this line of defense for our communities.

I also want to touch on a few other priorities that are important to my district and constituents.

First, I want to say I'm grateful for my Repair Amendment, which was adopted on the Floor in last year's House NDAA. And I would like to reiterate the importance of the Armed Forces being able to fix its own equipment. This continues to be critical for our military readiness and equipment confidence.

When military maintenance technicians aren't able to fix equipment on the field, whether it is an engine or a generator, because of restrictive contracting terms, it harms our military readiness, and it is a gut punch to technicians who came here to fix things, not to be on waitlist and a phone call with a representative from a manufacturer.

And lastly, I want to note that I was glad to see last year's final NDAA include the historically high 5.2 percent pay raise for servicemembers. I hope this year proves no different and we, again,

show our servicemembers that their selflessness and service is valued and deserves appropriate compensation.

I thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Perez can be found in the Appendix on page 32.]

The CHAIRMAN. We thank you. And I think you are going to be very happy when you see what we have proposed for pay increases this year for our servicemembers. In fact, this afternoon we are going to have our quality-of-life panel report press conference that will disclose that, along with some other things we are going to do to enhance the quality of life for our servicemembers.

I thank the gentlelady for her testimony.

The Ranking Member is recognized for any closing comments he may have.

Mr. SMITH. No, I'm good.

The CHAIRMAN. All right. With that, thank you for your participation. We are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 9:26 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

APRIL 11, 2024

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

APRIL 11, 2024

BLAKE D. MOORE

1ST DISTRICT, UTAH

1131 LONGWORTH HOB
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
202-225-0453

324 25TH STREET
OGDEN, UT 84401
801-625-0167

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4401

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BUDGET

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April 9, 2024

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman,

As a former member of this Committee, I'm honored to have the opportunity to testify on this year's defense priorities for the First District of Utah and the over 28,000 uniformed and civilian airmen of Hill Air Force Base who I represent in Congress. Because it has the rare privilege of being both an operational active-duty installation with combat ready F-35 aircraft while also hosting a major civilian workforce, Hill Air Force Base serves multiple mission sets that will be crucial to the warfighter during a potential peer conflict scenario in the Indo-Pacific.

As more F-35s become operational, opening more hanger space in the Ogden Air Logistics Complex at Hill to maintain these fighters will be critical to the future of U.S. air superiority. However, critical resources, technical expertise, and man-hours are pulled away from the F-35 program every day to maintain legacy aircraft such as the A-10 that do not fit modern-day operational relevance. I've worked with committee members and staff on base text language that would require the Air Force to go through an annual briefing exercise to determine where A-10 divestiture delays are occurring, their strategy for maintaining an aggressive timeline, and how to transition civilian maintainers towards the F-35 program.

However, organic depot performance is also driven by access to talent. I remain deeply concerned about the DOD's inability to hire qualified and skilled military members shortly after they retire, and how this impacts the overall readiness of our armed forces. I've supported language both on and off the Armed Services Committee that would repeal the existing 180-day waiting period that a military retiree must complete until he or she can enter a civilian job at the DOD – and today I'd like to again emphasize how important this change is as this Committee drafts and considers our next NDAA. At a time when our depots, arsenals, and shipyards struggle to keep up with the brutally competitive hiring environments of the private sector, the federal government needs access to candidates who possess active security clearances and the specialized skills required to support our national security priorities.

Hill Air Force Base and all of Utah is honored to be the home of the 388th Fighter Wing, the Air Force's first combat-coded fifth generation fighter unit. When I speak to the leadership at Hill, they remind me that F-35 aircraft have not consistently been accompanied by equally modern fifth-generation weaponry and sensory equipment, which could gravely impact national security in a conflict scenario. I look forward to working with members of this committee to include language in the NDAA that would require the Air Force to develop an annual service-

BLAKE D. MOORE
1st DISTRICT, UTAH

1131 LONGWORTH HOB
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
202-225-0453

324 25TH STREET
OGDEN, UT 84401
801-625-0107

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4401

COMMITTEES
WAYS AND MEANS
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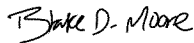
wide planning initiative to quickly implement fifth generation weapons into the F-35 program and a strategy for any needed policy changes to accomplish this.

Additionally, Hill Air Force Base and surrounding defense partners are rightfully proud of their work developing the LGM-35A Sentinel program, which will replace our aging Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles and bring nearly 4000 jobs to northern Utah. Utahns know that the foundation of strategic deterrence and the protection of the American homeland is a credible nuclear force, which is why supporting the Sentinel program remains so crucial given the unstable geopolitical environment we find ourselves in. I remain a steadfast advocate for the program and look forward to working with committee members to ensure its delivery.

Lastly, I would be remiss not to mention the major quality of life challenges currently facing military servicemembers in my district. Fueled by pandemic population shifts and DOD programs at Hill, housing costs in Northern Utah have exploded - rising by 27% in 2021 alone. At the same time, the MILCON backlog and military dormitory crisis remains a preeminent issue, meaning that lower enlisted airmen are being forced off base to seek housing they cannot afford. I've worked with committee members to craft language requiring the Comptroller General of the United States to assess alternative locality pay formulations that more appropriately reflect changes in cost of living, cost of housing, and other factors impacting civilian and uniformed servicemembers of the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to working with your team on securing these priorities in this year's National Defense Authorization Act.

Sincerely,



Representative Blake Moore
Member of Congress

GREG STANTON
ARIZONA'S FOURTH DISTRICT

Vice Ranking Member
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE
AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT SUBCOMMITTEE
WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
WESTERN HEMISPHERE SUBCOMMITTEE



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

WASHINGTON OFFICE
207 CANNON BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-9868

DISTRICT OFFICE
1220 S. ALMA SCHOOL ROAD, STE. 200
MESA, ARIZONA 85210
(602) 956-2463

STANTON.HOUSE.GOV

April 11, 2024

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about my priorities and concerns as a representative for Arizona's 4th District. As you work on crafting this year's National Defense Authorization Act, I ask you to keep in mind some of the issues that will have an impact on my constituents, and for the state of Arizona.

Specifically, I want to raise to the committee today:

- The defense industry in Arizona;
- The federal responsibility we have to help "downwinders" in my state;
- Keeping troops on our defense base safe and cool; and
- Data security

Defense industry in Arizona

Defense, as you know, is a team sport. In Arizona, we have several companies whose prime focus is to produce the equipment and technology that keep Americans safe on the battlefield and at home. The defense industry is a source of pride for the state. These companies are vital to national security. These range from connecting vehicles to low earth orbit satellites, so we do not lose communication with DoD ground vehicles, to manufacturing ENVG-B night vision goggles that enable our troops in the field to stay situationally aware of their surroundings - and safe.

There are also manufacturers in Arizona that create aviation equipment, working with their DoD partners to produce Chinook, Black Hawk, and Apache helicopters. Not only are these products necessary for national security, but these jobs are also essential. They are important for Arizona families and our local economy. Overall our defense industry has an economic impact of \$19 billion dollars—that equals 80,000 jobs!

The authorities, funding, and program improvements in the NDAA year to year keep this economy in Arizona thriving, and as you develop this year's bill, I would ask you to continue to invest in these innovative technologies and production manufacturing.

RECA and Downwinders

One of my top priorities in Congress is to help the Downwinders in my state. "Downwinders" is a term for people who were "downwind" of radioactive pollution from more than 200 weapons tests done in Arizona between 1945 and 1962. As you on this committee are aware, this radiation resulted in cancers and other serious diseases for those living in the polluted areas. While Congress attempted to make amends in 1990 by passing the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), affected individuals in portions of Mohave County, Arizona, and Clark County, Nevada, were excluded from the program for no logical scientific reason.

Counties to the south and the east of Clark and Mohave were included, while Clark and Mohave were carved up. This is not acceptable. This radiation spread and impacted the health and wellbeing of residents in ineligible areas. My bill, H.R. 4754, the Downwinders Parity Act, would extend downwinder eligibility to those who were present in lower Clark County and lower Mohave County during a period of atmospheric testing at the Nevada Test Site. These Americans deserve justice for their illnesses caused by their own government's atomic testing, and we are running out of time.

The Senate made great headway in the past year on extending RECA and expanding the Americans it covered. But it was not included in the final version of the 2024 NDAA. I am profoundly disappointed that the bipartisan effort to extend RECA and expand it to all Arizonans was left out of the final bill last year.

We, as partners in the federal government, have a responsibility to make amends to downwinders and miners who were exposed to radiation. I implore the committee to include it this year and welcome the opportunity to support Representatives Vasquez and Moylan in their efforts on this committee. Radioactive fallout doesn't adhere to state boundaries. Arizona and New Mexico have both suffered. It is imperative that we expand eligibility to all impacted parties, and I hope that expansion will be included in this year's bill.

Heat and Defense

Arizona has a proud and strong defense base. But, as many on this committee know, Arizona is warming. Last year, Phoenix had 133 days with temperatures at or above 100 degrees. That is harmful to anyone, but those on our military installations can face experience high levels of danger. It impacts our recruiting ability, and our service readiness. In fact, almost 3,000 troops experienced heat-related illnesses last year, a number that has grown 50% in 5 years.

The Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma, Arizona, right on the border, is one of the country's hottest military bases. And when my staff toured Luke Air Force Base in Phoenix last year, they showed us how the air conditioning units retrofitted to their old buildings created tripping hazards, blocked walkways, and *still* were only able to get indoor temperatures down to the mid-80s during an Arizona summer.

As you craft this bill, I ask you to think of weatherizing our defense infrastructure on the front lines of climate change and consider innovations to keep our military men and women cool and healthy as they train to keep us safe.

Data Security in DoD

This year has been huge for domestic technology and innovation with the implementation of the CHIPS and Science Act. I was especially proud to have helped bring \$8.5 billion to Intel, which has been manufacturing chips in Arizona since the 80s.

But as we continue to invest in our local, American-made chips and our national security goals, we must also be vigilant in the management of our data assets.

Right now, the DOD purchases many of its computers and printers from companies that are manufactured in China. Healthy trade and global consumerism are important. Yet as we focus on building our own businesses and nearshoring our own technologies, we also need to be mindful about what we are procuring, from whom, and what role that plays in our national security. Specifically in technologies related to CHIPS, we do not want to become over-reliant on our strategic competitors.

And this extends past weapons development and manufacturing- this is even in the computers we use in our day-to-day jobs. Other agencies, including the State Department, prohibited the purchase of goods from select companies starting back in 2007 when they believed procuring personnel equipment from a competitor in this way could be a national security risk.

America's defense system has some of the most sensitive information in the world, and especially now- as we invest in American semiconductor-manufacturing initiatives- I ask you to consider data sensitivity as you craft this year's NDAA.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, for allowing me to speak at this Member Day. I appreciate your leadership and your attention to these important issues. I look forward to partnering with you, the committee, and my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to deliver for the people of Arizona's 4th District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Stanton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Greg Stanton
Member of Congress

TITLE: **Speak: House Armed Services Committee
(HASC) Members Day Hearing**

DATE: Thursday, April 11, 2024

TIME: 9:00am

LOCATION: 2118 RHOB

Talking Points

- Thank you, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith, for holding this hearing.
- Today, I'm here to discuss three of my legislative priorities, focused on improving infrastructure in and around our military installations, affordable housing for our nations' veterans and servicemembers and, lastly, maternal health care for our servicemembers and their families.
- But first, I will touch on the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP) and the Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP).
- I represent Washington's Sixth Congressional District, home to Naval Base Kitsap in Bremerton. Kitsap is home to one of the Navy's four public shipyards: the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PSNS).
- PSNS plays an outsized role for the Department of Defense's current priority theater – INDOPACOM – in that it is the Navy's only dry dock on the West Coast capable of performing carrier work.
- As you know, in 2018, the Navy released its 20-year, \$21-billion Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program – or SIOP – to revitalize and modernize infrastructure at the shipyards, increase climate resilience, and improve resistance to natural disasters.
- The timely execution of SIOP is vital to the Navy's mission, to the security of the work being done in the yards, and to our national security.

- Any delays or shortfalls in funding for SIOP could result in additional deterioration and damage to the already substandard facilities, utilities, dry docks, equipment, and information technology infrastructure at the four public shipyards. PSNS has also faced seismic mitigation needs. Without robust funding, our shipyards will be unable to meet current and future demands of the fleet.
- Additionally, the Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP) was created in 2019 to help communities around military installations address infrastructure deficiencies.
- This is a unique program because it allows the Defense Department to partner with local communities and share the often expensive costs of infrastructure upgrades.
- So, I appreciate your consideration of my request to prioritize funding for the SIOP, including continued seismic mitigation efforts, and my request for authorizing \$100 million for DCIP, to grow this important program.
- Second, I want to bring the VALID Act to your attention.
- The VALID Act is bipartisan, bicameral, and focuses on affordable housing, specifically for our nation's veterans.
- One important way we can honor their sacrifice is by ensuring those who serve can achieve their dream of one day owning a home.
- VA home loans can offer veterans, active duty servicemembers, reservists, and national guard members advantages over other loan options, including lower down payments, more favorable interest

rates, and low closing costs, often saving tens of thousands of dollars over the life of the loan.

- Despite these benefits, overall usage of VA home loans is surprisingly low, with only 10 to 15 percent of veterans annually reported as using the benefit.
- Providing a simple update to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's existing "Informed Consumer Choice Disclosure Notice" will help close that loop and ensure veterans and servicemembers are aware of their hard-earned VA loan benefit.
- Specifically, the bill will add VA home loans to the current disclosure form lenders provide to prospective home buyers, which right now only compares conventional and FHA loan options.
- Several members of your committee have cosponsored the bill, and it's supported by stakeholder organizations including the Veterans Association of Real Estate Professionals, Veterans United Home Loans, Military Officers Association of America, National Association of Realtors, and Veterans of Foreign Wars.
- Lastly, I plan to introduce the MIDWIVES for Service Members Act of 2024".
- This legislation would direct DOD to develop and establish a five-year demonstration project designed to evaluate the cost, quality of care, and impact on maternal and fetal outcomes of using Certified Professional Midwives (CPM) and Certified Midwives (CM) under the TRICARE program.
- Like the doula and lactation counselors pilot program in the fiscal year 2021 NDAA, this bill aims to expand health care access in my

district, which is becoming a maternity care desert after the labor and delivery unit at Naval Hospital Bremerton (NHB) closed its doors in 2018.

- I am grateful for the tremendous dedication and sacrifice of those who have served, and I'm committed to ensuring they receive the care and benefits that they deserve – and have earned. We must expand and increase the quality of and access to maternal care nationwide.
- Thank you again for your time and for your leadership on these issues.
- I look forward to working with you to move these critical pieces of legislation forward.
- And I yield back.

TESTIMONY OF JAMES P. MCGOVERN (MA-02)
FISCAL YEAR 2025 NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
April 11, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith, for giving me this opportunity to talk to you about one of my priorities for the FY 2025 National Defense Authorization Act.

The Wounded Warrior Service Dog Program was created as a \$1 million pilot program in the FY 2015 Defense Appropriations Bill and has seen consistent bipartisan support to increase funding to its current level of \$16 million in FY 2024.

I want to thank this Committee for recognizing the success of the program in 2020 by including the amendment I filed with Representative Jackie Walorski in a bipartisan en bloc amendment, which established the Wounded Warrior Service Dog Program as a program of record in the FY 2021 NDAA.

Regrettably, the program shifted its primary purpose in 2023. It's no longer a competitive grant program that provides resources for nonprofits to increase capacity to raise, train, and place service dogs with eligible veterans and service members. Instead, the primary goal is to research standards for raising service dogs. The new guidelines for organizations applying for funding do not even consider if the award would increase capacity to place service dogs with veterans.

As you well know, so many of our service members and veterans return home from the battlefield suffering from post-traumatic stress (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and other mental and physical disabilities.

Over the past decade, I've had the opportunity to spend time at the National Education for Assistance Dog Services – or NEADS – located in Princeton, Massachusetts. Like similar non-profits, NEADS customizes each dog's training to serve its future owner. Dogs can be trained to retrieve medicine from a refrigerator, turn the lights on and scan an empty house before the owner enters, guard an owner's back in a public setting, and even wake up an owner from a nightmare.

I've had countless conversations with constituents and other veterans around the country who tell me having a service dog on their support team has saved their lives. They tell me about how it helped them reintegrate into the social framework of their families and communities, and often reduces their reliance on prescription drugs.

Today, I'm here to ask the Committee to include the text of the bipartisan amendment to the NDAA I filed last year with Representatives Fitzpatrick, LaLota, D'Esposito, and Garbarino, that was included in the House-passed FY 2024 NDAA, and would clarify the congressional intent of establishing the Wounded Warrior Service Dog Program.

Rather than repurposing these resources, let's get back to supporting these highly technical non-profits so they can continue to do what they do best – help our veterans.

Thank you, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith. I'm happy to hear any comments and take any questions you might have for me.

Thank you Mr. Chairman [Mike Rogers or a designee],

As I did last year, I am here again today to advocate for a future fighter mission for Selfridge Air National Guard Base.

Selfridge, home to the 127th Wing, houses A-10s and KC-135 tankers, with both missions being divested in 2027 and 2029, respectively. Selfridge—the jewel of Southeast Michigan—is located next to Lake St. Clair and houses our friends in the Coast Guard, Army, Border Patrol, Marines, and Navy. Its most critical assets are the men and women serving at the 127th fighter wing, including **six** weapon school graduates—the Top Gun equivalent for the Air Force. Something that is hard to come by. Yet, despite the Michigan delegations' best efforts, securing a future fighter mission for Selfridge has eluded us.

As this committee formulates the FY25 NDAA, I believe it is critical that Congress enact a fighter recapitalization policy that will maintain 25 for 25 fighter wings across the Air National Guard, to include Selfridge. Congress has a vital role to ensure that our Total Force maintains its critical strategic assets to remain competitive with China and future pacing threats. Through the work of our Governor, Senators, House members, and our community we are confident that we can welcome an F-15EX or F-35A fighter squadron to Southeast Michigan.

Along with fighters, Selfridge is also a prime location to host future armed reconnaissance platforms. Following the Army's cancellation of the FARA program—I hope that the Army considers stationing manned attack aircraft in the Army National Guard. My hope is that this NDAA can help the Army consider the future of attack aircraft in the Army National Guard's modernization strategy to help provide critical depth to the Joint Force.

Lastly, as the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, I want to advocate for supporting the critical mission that AFRICOM is doing in the continent by requesting funding for:

- Somalia Persistent Presence,
- High Risk ISR,
- Enterprise C2 Resiliency, and

- Commercial Satellite Communications.

Along with these priorities, I hope the committee considers supporting AFRICOM's objectives with the Combined Joint Inter-Agency Coordination Group - West Africa (CJIACG-WA).

I would appreciate your feedback and I hope your team can connect with mine on these critical matters to Michigan and to our Nation. [yield]

NIKKI BUDZINSKI
13TH DISTRICT, ILLINOIS

WASHINGTON OFFICE
1009 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-2371

SPRINGFIELD OFFICE
133 SOUTH 4TH STREET, SUITE 300
SPRINGFIELD, IL 62701
(217) 814-2880



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

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
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AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HEALTH

April 11, 2024

House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony before the House Armed Services Committee as part of the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) Member Day.

I am here today to advocate for the inclusion of a bipartisan ask focused on the safety of our military members and in support of domestic manufacturing.

This bipartisan provision, crafted in partnership with House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Bost, has two major aims. The first is that it will require the Department of Defense to issue regulations to the Department of the Army to ensure all boots are Berry-amendment compliant and meet the highest quality and performance standards. Our troops deserve to have the best quality military equipment and uniforms to support the rigors of training and deployment. The second aim of this provision is to improve our domestic industrial supply base by requiring boots be American-made and that all materials in the supply chain are American-sourced.

Over the past several years, there has been a concerning influx of poorly made, non-Berry compliant, and foreign-sourced footwear targeted at the United States Army. Army Regulation 670-1 was created to ensure that garments and equipment worn by our soldiers meet certain appearance and quality standards, and to make sure equipment could withstand severe conditions.

However, over time, the market for Army soldier footwear has been taken over by foreign manufacturers, to the point where much of the Army footwear we see today only have the appearance of AR-670 design but do not meet the performance or quality standards. This means current Army uniform regulations allow soldiers to purchase foreign-made combat boots that pose a significant safety threat to them and their fellow soldiers.

Ensuring American-sourced and -made boots are worn by our military personnel is not a novel idea. In fact, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps require their service members wear American-made boots at all times. It is past time we require the same for the Department of the Army.

I thank Congressman Bost for his partnership on this important provision, and I ask that the Committee support its inclusion and passage in this year's National Defense Authorization Act.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony, and I look forward to working with you on these important issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nikki Budzinski".

Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress

Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez -- HASC NDAA Member Day

April 11th, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith, for the opportunity to testify today.

I am here today to advocate for the inclusion of certain provisions of my bipartisan bill, the PARA-EMT Act, which I introduced with Congressman Finstad in the FY25 National Defense Authorization Act.

Our servicemembers who completed military emergency medical technician training while serving have an incredible skill set that should be celebrated and utilized as they transition out of the Armed Forces. We can better serve both those transitioning servicemembers, as well as our rural communities, by making it easier for experienced veterans to transition from medics to becoming certified civilian paramedics and EMTs.

This provision would create a program for states to facilitate and expedite the transition of medics coming out of the military to meet certification, licensure, and other requirements applicable to becoming an EMT or paramedic. This will support the recruitment of EMS staff in rural areas and cut red tape for veterans looking to build on their service to their country by becoming a certified EMT or paramedic. I appreciate Rep. Finstad's partnership to support rural first responders and strengthen this line of defense for our communities.

I also want to touch on a few other priorities that are important to my district and constituents. First, I want to say that I am grateful that my repair amendment was adopted on the floor in last year's House NDAA and I'd like to reiterate the importance of the Armed Forces being able to fix its own equipment. This continues to be critical for our military readiness and equipment confidence. When military maintenance technicians aren't able to fix equipment in the field – whether it's an engine or a simple generator – because of restrictive contracting terms, it harms our military readiness and is a gut punch to technicians, who want to work with their hands to fix things.

Lastly, I want to note that I was also glad to see last year's final NDAA include the historically high 5.2% pay raise for service members. I hope this year proves no different– and we again show our service members that their selfless service is valued and deserves appropriate compensation.

I thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

APRIL 11, 2024

CLAY HIGGINS
3RD DISTRICT, LOUISIANA
MEMBER, HOUSE FREEDOM CAUCUS



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
CHAIRMAN, BORDER SECURITY AND ENFORCEMENT
TRANSPORTATION AND MARITIME SECURITY
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND
THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE
NATIONAL SECURITY, THE
BORDER, AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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

Written Testimony for Clay Higgins (R-LA)
National Security Priorities and National Defense Authorization Act FY2025
House Armed Services Committee
April 11, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith, for the opportunity to discuss the importance of this year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and the national security priorities of the country going forward. The NDAA is essential to ensure key programs, secure the proper funding to enhance the defense capabilities of our country, and further deter our adversaries.

The NDAA has an unparalleled impact on our nation's defense as a whole, and it is a vital and critical piece of legislation for South Louisiana. Louisiana is home to many of the nation's storied small shipyards and essential industries for the military's operations and maintenance, with several located in Louisiana's 3rd District. Each of these assets relies on the NDAA's guidance and funding support for our defense capabilities.

I wish to inform the committee of a few opportunities for the fiscal year 2025 NDAA that would have a direct impact on my home state of Louisiana.

First, I would like to discuss the importance of the 40-foot patrol boats and funding to keep this program on track and on schedule. The 40-foot patrol boats are essential to the Navy's mission and support a wide range of maritime security operations and tasks. Small shipyards, like Metal Shark Boats in Louisiana's 3rd District, have been delivering these patrol boats on schedule. In order for small shipyards to maintain this timely delivery of the 40-foot patrol boats, a total budget increase of \$52.2 million for a total of \$60 million for FY25 is necessary for the Navy to maintain these critical assets to our national defense.

Further, funding and support are needed to modernize the living and housing conditions for thousands of Navy personnel. It was disappointing to see that there was no funding included within the President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2025 for the new class of Yard, Repair, Berthing, and Messing (YRBM) barge crafts essential to this modernization effort. The Navy has requested an acceleration of this program since 2022, which would entail that 2 YRBM vessels be funded in FY2025 for a total of \$60 million.

Small shipyards in Louisiana have a storied history of providing premier vessels for our nation's Armed Forces. As the Department of Defense and the country as a whole look toward

572 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-2031

1825 RYAN STREET, SUITE C
LAKE CHARLES, LA 70601
(337) 656-2853

600 JEFFERSON STREET, SUITE 808
LAFAYETTE, LA 70501
(337) 703-8105

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future technology and the use of autonomous craft, I believe it is essential that Congress secure the proper funding for the research and development of these programs. Autonomous vessels are the future and can be made at a relatively low cost and in an expedited timeline, allowing the U.S. to deploy faster and overwhelm our adversary's own capabilities.

Additionally, my office has received requests aimed at advancing military and commercial satellite programs that would encourage domestic manufacturing of critical resources as well as the operations and maintenance support for our Armed Forces that are deployed. Authorized funding for these programs would have a direct impact on South Louisiana and would enable a strong U.S. position across the world. I believe the most righteous posture to avoid war is to effectively prepare to dominate any aggressor across the globe, and nowhere is that mission clearer than in the Pacific.

As the committee reviews priorities for the NDAA, I implore you to consider programs that would have a direct impact on Louisiana and increase our force readiness as a nation. I appreciate my colleagues on this committee who I, as well as my staff, have been in communication with regarding the NDAA, and I appreciate the time given to Members to speak before the committee to discuss the importance of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2025.

My office stands ready and able to provide more information regarding the requests that were received for the National Defense Authorization Act. I respectfully request that thoughtful consideration be given to the industry in South Louisiana for this year's NDAA.



**Testimony of Congressman Danny K. Davis
Before the House Armed Services Committee
Member Day Hearing on the National Defense Authorization Act of 2025
April 11, 2024**

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to present my policy and programmatic priorities for consideration for inclusion in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2025. As the Committee begins its works in a bipartisan fashion to advance an annual reauthorization bill that will help strengthen the nation's security and enhance the quality of life of our dedicated servicemembers and officers, I write to respectfully request your consideration of three defense related policy recommendations that if enacted can potentially have a net positive impact on military families in my congressional district as well as throughout the country.

Specifically, I want to highlight the need for modernizing the Department of Defense's Adoption Reimbursement Program, as authorized under Title 10 U.S. Code § 1052. As an addendum to my statement for the record, I am including legislative language that amends the program's current statutory authority by increasing the maximum funding levels members of the armed forces are permitted to receive to assist with adoption related expenses, authorizing program eligibility for military families that pursue guardianship as means of providing permanency for a child, and providing the Secretary of Defense discretionary authority to offer military families monetary assistance in advance of an adoption or guardianship or as a reimbursement for associated expenses incurred.

Given the impact these proposed modifications to DOD's Adoption Assistance Program will have on thousands of military personnel and their loved ones looking to grow their families, it is my sincere hope that the Committee will fully consider my proposed reforms for inclusion in **Title V- Military Personnel Policy, Subtitle I – Family Programs, Childcare, and Dependent Education of the NDAA FY25**. *(See addendum for legislative text)*

Additionally, I would like to commend the Committee for its recent efforts to highlight the importance of continual support for the Department's Advanced Trauma and Public Health Direct Training Services Program. As you may be aware, this specialized training course equips servicemembers in both the Army and Air National Guards with state-of-the-art knowledge and hands-on skills required to provide advanced acute management for trauma patients and prevention, intervention, and treatment for infectious disease outbreaks. This program, which is conducted in collaboration with Rush, University Medical Center, Chicago, Illinois in my congressional district, focuses on the right training at the right time, and is aligned with Army, Air Force, and National Guard Bureau medical training requirements; thereby preparing these military members for a combat environment or response in the event of a domestic or international incident.

For the NDAA FY25, I respectfully request the Committee's consideration of the following trauma training related language for inclusion in **Title V – Military Personnel Policy, Subtitle H- Member Training and Transition:**

Sec. ____ Advanced Trauma and Public Health Direct Training Services

The Committee directs the Chief of the National Guard Bureau to continue state-of-the-art trauma, critical care, behavioral health, public health, and other ancillary direct medical training utilizing academic medical centers, which provide the aforementioned disciplines for Air National Guard and Army National Guard Medical and Non-Medical Personnel and State Partnership Program/Global Health Engagement international partners to minimize civilian-military and international coalition medical operational gaps in the event of a catastrophic incident. These preparedness programs shall be delivered through direct training services, to include advanced trauma, public health, and combat lifesaver curriculums focusing on critical life-saving procedures, epidemiology of public health diseases, prevention and treatment, mass casualty triage, and psychological health.

Lastly, I applaud the Committee's ongoing efforts to emphasize the significance of modernizing the nation's organic industrial base to better support the Department of Defense. Since 2018, MxD, a Chicago-based commercial enterprise and part of the National Digital Manufacturing and Cybersecurity Institute, which is authorized and funded under the Army's Operation and Maintenance, Army Operating Forces account, has increasingly supported modernization efforts at multiple DOD facilities and looks to accelerate in the near future the rates of digital manufacturing and workforce transformations. This Digital Modernization Accelerator Program will support existing and future requests from Army Material Command and their subordinate commands, to implement digital, cybersecurity, and work force development capabilities at all organic industrial base installations.

In furtherance of these developments, I'd like to request the Committee's consideration of including the following supportive language in the FY25 NDAA, under **Title VIII – Acquisition Policy, Acquisition Management and Related Matters, Subtitle E Industrial Base Matters:**

Sec. ____ Secure Digital Modernization Implementation –

The Committee recognizes the need to accelerate and modernize the Army's organic industrial base. Our nation's arsenals and depots provide critical materiel and sustainment support to warfighters around the world by manufacturing, repairing, maintaining, and deposing of essential equipment and munitions, which ensures the readiness and superiority of the Army. The Committee appreciates the assessments the Department's designated digital manufacturing institute has provided to date.

Therefore, the Committee recommends a total increase of \$19,500,000 for Army Operation and Maintenance to support the nation's digital manufacturing institute. The institute's digital modernization accelerator program will continue to scale enterprise-level modernization across the Army's organic industrial base.

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to submit for the record my top three policy and programmatic priorities for the FY25 NDAA, and I look forward to working with you as the Committee advances important must pass national security related legislation.

Member Day Testimony on FY2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)
House Committee on Armed Services
Congressman Darren Soto (FL-09)
April 11, 2024

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, thank you for allowing me to testify before the Committee about my priorities for the National Defense Authorization Act of 2025.

My priorities for inclusion in the NDAA include semiconductor manufacturing and research, investment in modeling and simulation capabilities, service collaboration regarding the development of Florida's spaceport, research and development for hypersonic capabilities, and research and development for simulated clinical environments.

Semiconductor Manufacturing and Research:

I urge the committee to support the highest funding levels possible for domestic semiconductor advanced packaging production through the DoD RESHAPE Program, as well as funding for research into new, energy efficient semiconductor manufacturing capabilities.

The development of domestic semiconductor manufacturing is key to ensuring U.S. national security. Trusted domestic manufacturing processes help guarantee the integrity of both commercial and military systems, as domestic manufacturing can provide a supply of trusted system components for both the U.S. and its allies. In addition, innovation in semiconductor manufacturing bolsters our leadership in cutting edge alternatives to system components produced or controlled by U.S. adversaries. New manufacturing methods, including semiconductor advanced packaging processes, hold promise for defense electronics systems by enhancing semiconductor performance, density, and power efficiency.

To ensure U.S. competitiveness in semiconductor manufacturing, I urge the Committee to authorize the highest funding levels possible for the Advanced Secure Packaging (RESHAPE) program within the Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment's Program. DoD's RESHAPE Program supports the nation's only trusted, domestic semiconductor advanced packaging production program. I also urge the Committee to support research into new, innovative energy efficient chip fabrication processes to further support U.S. leadership in semiconductor manufacturing.

New Modeling and Simulation Capabilities:

I urge the Committee to support the development of new modeling and simulation capabilities. As technological advancements lead to increased battlespace complexity, the development of new capabilities in this area are essential to national defense. Current modeling and simulation

tools do not reflect the realities of today's operating environment. To prepare for new battlespace realities, we need new capabilities that accurately reflect our adversaries' forces and systems, including adaptive automated computer-generated forces. New capabilities under development in Orlando, Florida at the University of Central Florida (UCF) will enable training environments that allow U.S. and allied forces to train under more realistic conditions.

Collaboration for Development of Florida Spaceport:

I urge the Committee to encourage collaboration between the Air Force, Space Force, Navy, Army, Port Canaveral, Coast Guard, and Space Florida to coordinate infrastructure improvements at Port Canaveral, Florida.

U.S. national security is increasingly tied to the expansion of industrial launch and recovery capabilities. While these capabilities can largely be attributed to recent innovation in the commercial space marketplace, they also provide the military and intelligence community with a competitive edge against key adversaries like China and Russia. Launch and recovery capabilities also support NASA exploration and the broader commercial satellite enterprise that supports government missions. Most of the new launch vehicles that rely on this capability depend on a maritime component for the recovery of launch boosters. Cape Canaveral supports a sizeable portion of the nation's commercial and military launches and currently has some of the required infrastructure in place to support launch and maritime recovery. However, current infrastructure is not equipped to support the projected increase in military and commercial launch and recovery missions. Space Florida, a special district of the state of Florida, in partnership with the U.S. Space Force, NASA, the Navy, Coast Guard and Port Canaveral recently launched a feasibility study to develop strategic recommendations for wharf infrastructure improvements and the design of a transload wharf facility. Once this study is completed, it is imperative that the Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, Navy, and Army continue ongoing collaboration with Port Canaveral and Space Florida to ensure critical infrastructure improvements to Florida's Space Coast.

Research and Development for Hypersonic Capabilities:

I urge the Committee to support research and development for hypersonic capabilities. Russia and China support a number of hypersonic weapons programs. It is imperative to national defense that the U.S. keep pace and surpass our strategic competitors in this space. Programs like UCF's Propulsion Lab are at the forefront of research essential to hypersonic development, including research into detonation-based propulsion. This Air Force funded program presents a pathway to high-hypersonic (Mach 8 – 17) powered flight. Investment in this type of research is key to ensuring U.S. competitiveness in hypersonics.

Research and Development for Simulated Clinical Environments:

I urge the Committee to support research for simulated clinical environments, like those currently in use at the SimVet Center in Orlando, Florida. These environments offer new opportunities to test clinical software applications, test medical devices, and to optimize patient care. Specifically, these environments offer opportunities to ensure the safety and efficacy of healthcare solutions prior to their implementation. This technology holds great promise for improving healthcare outcomes for service members and their families.

House Committee on Armed Services
Full Committee Hearing: Member Day
April 11, 2024
Statement for the Record – Rep. Dean Phillips (MN-03)

Thank you, Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the House Committee on Armed Services, for the opportunity to provide a statement for the hearing record outlining my priorities for the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act. I look forward to working with you to craft an NDAA that supports our servicemembers, keeps our country safe, and advances our national security priorities.

As the United States continues to navigate escalating threats from our global adversaries, we must prepare for the modern-day challenges of great power competition. The nature of warfare is changing, and we must be attentive to unconventional threats, like malicious gray zone tactics. Long discussed among national security policy experts, the “gray zone” refers to a wide swath of aggressive actions – like cyber-attacks, support for hostile proxy groups, and hostage diplomacy – that aim to weaken the U.S. and its allies without escalating to acts of war.

I have offered a number of proposals that would equip the United States with a plan to identify and combat hostile gray zone tactics. I believe the President should appoint a Gray Zone Director, develop a comprehensive strategy to counter gray zone tactics, and report to Congress on interagency efforts to combat the gray zone operations of Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea.

As a Gold Star Son, my gratitude to our servicemembers and their families is immeasurable. Spouses of those who die in service to our nation make unimaginable sacrifices and deserve unending respect and support in return. Unfortunately, surviving spouses of federal personnel risk losing survivor benefits if they remarry under the age of 55. My legislation, the *Love Lives On Act*, would ensure military spouses are allowed to retain benefits upon remarriage no matter their age. The bill’s protections extend to surviving spouses of active-duty, veteran, and retired military personnel.

I was thrilled to pass a portion of this legislation in last year’s NDAA, granting remarried surviving spouses access to Commissary and Exchange benefits. I hope to advance the remaining pieces of the bill – allowing remarried surviving spouses to retain Survivor Benefit Plan and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, access electronic medical services, and maintain education benefits under the Fry Scholarship program – in this year’s NDAA to eliminate completely remarriage benefit reductions for anyone who dies in service to their country.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share my priorities with the Committee and I look forward to our continued collaboration.

ED CASE
1ST DISTRICT, HAWAII

2210 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
TELEPHONE: 202-225-2726
FAX: 202-225-0688

1132 BISHOP STREET, SUITE 1100
HONOLULU, HI 96813
TELEPHONE: 808-650-6688
FAX: 808-533-0133

WEBSITE: CASE.HOUSE.GOV

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

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEES:
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HOMELAND SECURITY

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL
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SUBCOMMITTEES:
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS
INDIAN AND INSULAR AFFAIRS
WATER, WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES

April 8, 2024

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith and members of the Committee:

Good morning and aloha,

And thank you to the Committee for the opportunity to again testify on our annual National Defense Authorization Act.

I would like to highlight three points, all related to implementation of our National Defense Strategy and focusing on the Indo-Pacific and the pacing geopolitical challenge of the Peoples Republic of China.

Pacific Deterrence Initiative

The first is ensuring that the Pacific Deterrence Initiative achieves the goals for which it was implemented.

PDI was established to enhance U.S. deterrence and defense, assure allies and partners, and counter adversary threats in the Indo-Pacific, by providing a detailed and coordinated account of spending and programs that advance U.S. strategic goals in the Indo-Pacific. Of course, like the European Deterrence Initiative, it was designed not just to properly quantify but to assure the coordinated funding required. A properly designed and implemented PDI would highlight quality investments in the Indo-Pacific but also areas lacking in investment.

Examples of areas that may not be sufficiently highlighted in PDI and not sufficiently resourced to date are campaigning and soft power. Efforts such as joint military exercises, Community Action Teams and infrastructure upgrades in partner nations.

I urge the Committee to continue your support for a fully funded and transparent PDI, but also to conduct a larger overview of PDI to assure that it does in fact function more like EDI rather than, as it was once characterized, just an accounting mechanism.

Defense Infrastructure

Also critical to our National Defense Strategy in the Indo-Pacific is ensuring resilient and mission ready military installations and command and control nodes. We all know that that in this area we are stretched by both budgets and logistics to retain a sufficient trajectory of both new infrastructure and repair and maintenance.

My Hawai'i exemplifies this challenge. Home to over one hundred thousand service members, dependents and civilians, twelve military installations, one of our nation's four

public shipyards, commands from every military service and Headquarters U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Hawai'i is the hub of military activity in the Pacific.

Unfortunately, the military's investment in critical infrastructure throughout Hawai'i has lagged over the past decades, resulting in multiple, critical failures in wastewater treatment plants, drinking water infrastructure, operations facilities, airfields and piers, training facilities, power infrastructure and more. If left unaddressed, the command and control of our forces in the Indo-Pacific and the resilience of our posture throughout the region is at risk.

I ask for the Committee's further support in ensuring that the Department of Defense continues to pursue a coordinated and fully funded effort to address failing critical infrastructure and develop the necessary plans and processes to mitigate future failures.

Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility

There is no greater example of the consequences of infrastructure failure throughout the DoD than the Red Hill bulk fuel storage facility leaks of 2021. Failures on a number of fronts resulted not only in risks to military preparedness but in serious health consequences and risks to hundreds of thousands of people and a crisis in the military-civilian relationship which is key to the military's presence in Hawai'i.

I would like first to again say say mahalo nui loa (my deepest thanks) to the Committee for your continued support in response to the crisis. I would also like to thank USINDOPACOM's Joint Task Force – Red Hill on its recent completion of defueling operations and transfer of responsibility to Navy Closure Task Force – Red Hill.

Although defueling is complete and permanent closure is underway, this crisis will require major support from the DoD and Congress for many years to come. In particular, aside from permanently closing the facility and assuring our bulk fuel storage needs are addressed elsewhere, we still don't have sufficient clarity of the extent to which the aquifer remains contaminated and the water is safe to drink, nor on long-term health implications, nor on the programs and funding required to address these and other issues.

I ask for the Committee's own continued support of the multiple lines of effort that must continue.

I again express my deep appreciation for this Committee's continued support for our efforts in the Indo-Pacific, for our service members and their families, and for my Hawai'i. I look forward to continuing to assist you in your initiatives.

Congressman Eric Sorensen
HASC Member Day Remarks
April 8, 2024

On April 9th, I introduced the *Arsenal Workload Sustainment Act* with my colleague Senator Dick Durbin (IL). Currently, Army Depots are guaranteed fifty percent workload; however, the same cannot be said for Army Arsenals.

I am honored to represent Illinois 17th Congressional District, home to the Rock Island Arsenal. The Arsenal does not have an assured, sustained workload throughout the year. As a result of this uncertainty, Rock Island struggles to keep costs low while remaining competitive.

The *Arsenal Workload Sustainment Act* will provide Arsenals with a more predictable, sustained workload throughout the year. Specifically, the bill will require a 50 percent workload threshold for government-owned and government-operated Army factories and arsenals.

This will broadly apply to production that can take place at Army arsenals and factories, leveraging their unique role in the organic industrial base and capabilities, such as the additive manufacturing expertise at the Rock Island Arsenal. This certainty will allow them to keep costs low while remaining competitive with private industry in the manufacturing or procurement of defense products.

During my time in Congress, I have prioritized the wellbeing of the Rock Island Arsenal, my neighbors who work on the island, and their families. I will continue to work to ensure Rock Island is sustainable for generations to come.

I urge the Committee to include the *Arsenal Workload Sustainment Act* in this year's National Defense Authorization Act so we can create jobs, support working families, and bolster our national security.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify.

H. MORGAN GRIFFITH
9TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA
COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEES:
OVERSIGHT & INVESTIGATIONS
CHAIRMAN
ENERGY, CLIMATE & GRID SECURITY
HEALTH
COMMITTEE ON
HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
SUBCOMMITTEE:
OVERSIGHT
www.morgangriffith.house.gov



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4069

Written Testimony
House Committee on Armed Services
Thursday, April 11, 2024

2202 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3860 PHONE
(202) 225-0076 FAX
323 WEST MAIN STREET
ARLINGTON, VA 24210
(703) 525-1405 PHONE
(703) 525-1444 FAX
17 WEST MAIN STREET
CHRISTIANBURG, VA 24073
(540) 381-5671 PHONE
(540) 381-5675 FAX

Thank you, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith, for holding this hearing today to allow Members to provide our input as you work on writing this year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). I want to thank this Committee for working with me last year to include language in the underlying bill addressing my deep-rooted concerns with an indefinite detention statute. Under Chairman Rogers, I was able to vote for the NDAA for only the second time in my 13 years in Congress. While the provision was not included in the final Conference Report, I am hopeful it will be passed into law this year.

My enduring objection to NDAA bills is based on what I believe is an unconstitutional provision. Further, the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included a provision in Section 1021(b) that greatly expanded the military's power under the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) to indefinitely detain any member of al-Qaeda, the Taliban, or anyone who assists them. This provision does not require a detainee to knowingly assist our enemies.

While our troops have withdrawn from Afghanistan after 20 long years of war, we are still engaged in hostilities with these groups and their so-called "associated forces" all around the world.

In my view, the statute essentially allows the military to detain any such person until the end of hostilities, regardless of citizenship, location, or intent. I believe that this provision is incompatible with the due process afforded to all American citizens under the Constitution.

My particular concern with this statute is that it makes no exception for the intent of the detained or any legal mechanism to challenge the detainment. This could become problematic for any American, including those on American soil. I do not believe the military should be able to exercise the power of indefinite detention at home against U.S. citizens without due process.

Being associated with a member of al-Qaeda or certain other groups could be as simple as unknowingly driving an acquaintance to a federal courthouse where you assume he works, only to find out later that the person committed a terrorist act. Unknowingly doing a favor for a neighbor could conceivably make you eligible for indefinite detention.

I am still deeply troubled by this ambiguity and believe that our armed forces will still be able to fight terrorism effectively even with this slight change in law. Last year, I was pleased to see this Committee favorably report H.R. 2670 with a prohibition on the indefinite detention of U.S. citizens as part of Section 1035. I urge this Committee to include that prohibition language again in this year's underlying NDAA text.

I hope to continue discussions with the Committee on this issue and appreciate your consideration. Thank you.

JASON CROW
6TH DISTRICT, COLORADO

WASHINGTON OFFICE
1323 LONGWORTH HOB.
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-7882

DISTRICT OFFICE
2170 S. PARKER ROAD, SUITE 280
AURORA, CO 80031
(720) 748-7514

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

Statement for the Record
Jason Crow
To be Submitted on April 11, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of including several important provisions in the Fiscal Year 2025 NDAA that I believe will enhance our national security.

The NDAA is one of the most significant pieces of legislation we consider each year. It is a reflection of our values, priorities, and unwavering support for the men and women who serve in uniform, as well as their families who sacrifice alongside them.

First, I request your support in securing funding for the Power Independence Project at Buckley Space Force Base (SFB). This is the U.S. Space Force's number one FY25 Unfunded Priority. With this funding, we aim to enhance energy resilience and independence at Buckley. By investing in Buckley SFB's energy infrastructure, we're strengthening our military readiness while bolstering the resilience of our infrastructure to withstand any challenges that may arise. This funding request is even more urgent with the evolving threat landscape and the need for reliable energy to support critical missions like the Space-Based Infrared Systems (SBIRS).

Please again include language to establish a Space National Guard (SNG). This request entails the formalization of the SNG as a reserve component of the United States Space Force (USSF), thereby aligning its structure and authorities with those of existing National Guard components. By establishing the SNG, we not only enhance the resilience and readiness of our space capabilities but also leverage the expertise and resources of the National Guard. The SNG will play a vital role in safeguarding our nation's interests in space and ensuring the security of critical space assets.

Additionally, I request that you include language to address the critical need for restoring and enhancing the Air Force's fighter force structure and air dominance. Establishing a minimum of 25 fighter squadrons in the Air National Guard is crucial for our overall readiness and resilience. By ensuring the full, one-for-one recapitalization of Air National Guard fighter squadrons, we can safeguard our nation's air superiority and maintain a credible deterrent posture in an increasingly contested and dynamic security environment.

Please also authorize an increase of \$3,000,000 for the Afghanistan War Commission. This bipartisan legislative commission was established by Congress in December 2021 to conduct a

comprehensive review of key decisions related to U.S. military, intelligence, foreign assistance, and diplomatic involvement in Afghanistan from June 2001 to August 2021. I strongly believe in the need for a full accounting of our nation's longest war.

Finally, it is also essential to honor the promises we made to Afghan partners who worked to support U.S. operations in Afghanistan. In keeping with the Afghan Allies Protection Act that I lead bicamerally with Senator Shaheen, I request authorization of an additional 8,000 visas and an extension of the program through 2029. This will raise the total authorized visas to 58,500, following the successful inclusion of an additional 12,000 Afghan Special Immigrant Visas in the FY2024 appropriations process.

I encourage the House Armed Services Committee to ensure this year's NDAA incorporates the provisions I have highlighted to enhance our national security posture. I look forward to working with the Committee to advance these and other priorities that I hope will be included in the final legislation.

House Armed Services Committee
Member Day Testimony from Rep. Jennifer Wexton (VA-10)
April 11, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Committee, for holding this Member Day hearing and for allowing me this opportunity to share a few key National Defense Authorization Act priorities on behalf of the people of Virginia's 10th Congressional District.

Manufacturing Industrial Institutes (MIIs)

I am grateful for the opportunity to address a critical aspect of shoring up the US defense industrial base (DIB) - the expansion of the Department of Defense's (DoD) Manufacturing Innovation Institutes (MIIs) to prepare the civilian workforce for an increase in defense manufacturing. The recently released National Defense Industrial Strategy emphasizes the importance of MIIs in promoting the rapid transition and delivery of new defense-essential technologies, benefiting over 80,000 participants in 2021 alone.

To further this important work, I am working on an FY25 NDAA provision requesting specifics on DoD's plans to expand investment in MIIs. I propose language directing DoD to complete a study on the feasibility of expanding investment in MIIs within 180 days of enactment of this text. The study should include details on DoD's plans to collaborate with universities, colleges, and private companies to enhance workforce development and advance manufacturing capabilities.

This issue is gaining increasing attention due to its critical need and potential economic benefits for the US workforce. The current tension between the need to expand defense production and the call to "Buy American" underscores the importance of upskilling the American workforce to meet the defense production needs of tomorrow. We believe that expanding investment in MIIs is a crucial step towards harmonizing these goals and ensuring a robust and capable defense industrial base for the future.

-

Dry Decontamination in the Arctic

Cold weather environments present unique challenges to the decontamination of military personnel, equipment, and warfighters exposed to chemical, biological, and radiological (CBR) contaminants for the effectiveness and safety of traditional decontamination methods. The primary difficulty arises from the subfreezing temperatures, which render water-based decontamination methods less effective due to the freezing of water, thereby complicating application processes and potentially damaging equipment or causing harm to individuals undergoing decontamination. Additionally, the use of water in such conditions increases the risk of hypothermia for decontaminated personnel.

Dry or water-less decontamination methods offer a promising solution to these challenges. These methods, including specialized wipes, powders, and vacuum systems, are unaffected by freezing temperatures, making them reliably deployable in all weather conditions. They also significantly reduce the risk of hypothermia by eliminating the use of water, enhancing the safety of decontamination procedures for personnel.

However, developing effective dry decontamination methods is a complex challenge that requires meticulous planning and coordination. It is essential to ensure the safety, efficacy, and practicality of these methods in diverse operational environments. This includes addressing issues such as broad-spectrum efficacy, material compatibility, and logistical considerations.

I urge the Committee to support the inclusion of report language in the NDAA directing the Army to provide a report on its strategy and plans for developing dry or water-less decontamination requirements and fielding capabilities into the force. This report will help ensure that the Department of Defense has the necessary tools and capabilities to protect our servicemembers from chemical, biological, and radiological contaminants in Arctic and cold-weather environments.

Language:

Dry Decontamination capabilities to support arctic warfighting

(1) The Committee is concerned about the ability of the Department to effectively secure and potentially decontaminate Servicemembers from chemical, biological, and radiological particulates in an arctic or cold-weather environment. The Committee is encouraged by the Department's testing of dry and water-less decontamination solutions and believes the Department should incorporate these capabilities, procedures, and tactics into current requirements and fielding plans. Further, these capabilities should be available soonest to units and servicemembers currently operating worldwide. The Committee directs the Secretary of the Army to report to the Congressional defense committees no later than December 15, 2024, on the Army's strategy and plans for developing dry or water-less decontamination requirements, and fielding capabilities into the force.

TESTIMONY: 2024 House Armed Services Member Day Priorities

Rep. Jim Costa | Word Count: 599 words

INTRODUCTION

- Thank you, Chairman Rodgers and Ranking Member Smith for the opportunity to present my priorities for the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Reauthorization Act.
- Keeping Americans safe is one of our greatest responsibilities as Members of Congress.
- The world is on fire with conflict, democracies around the world are under attack, and now more than ever, the United States must lead to secure peace through strength.
- And Congress must continue to invest in strategic military capabilities to meet the security challenges we face here at home and abroad.

144th Fighter Wing in Fresno

- Fresno is proud to host the 144th Fighter Wing, one of three Air National Guard bases selected to receive the new F-15EX jets.
- While this is exciting news, the 144th is facing up to a two-year gap between the retirement of its F-15Cs in 2026 and arrival of the F-15EXs no earlier than 2027.
- A gap will mean fighter pilots and maintenance personnel will have no mission and will likely transition away from the wing for other duties, degrading readiness and increasing costs of retraining and reconstituting the Fighter Wing.
- We must prevent this gap.
- Requiring continued maintenance of the F-15C aircraft for an additional one to two years until all F-15EXs can be fielded would address this. The Cs and EXs are very similar and can be operated on the same runways.
- The 144th is scheduled to receive its F-15EXs last of all National Guard Wings.

TESTIMONY: 2024 House Armed Services Member Day Priorities

Rep. Jim Costa | Word Count: 599 words

- Requiring concurrent distribution of F-15EX fighters across the National Guard Bases would fix this inequity and reduce the projected gap.
- This solution allows pilots and maintainers in all three fighter wings to remain current on training and keep all three missions viable during the F-15EX fielding process.
- The Committee should support these fixes to help ensure the 144th Fighter Wing can continue executing its critical mission without interruption.

Support for Armenia, Countering Azerbaijan

- Armenia is in a tough neighborhood and is reorienting to the West while looking to the US for support and reassurance.
- The small nation is still struggling to absorb over 110,000 Armenian refugees who fled Azerbaijan's rapid military takeover of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) in September 2023.
- The United States has a unique opportunity right now to build stronger ties, and bolster US interests, and should respond to events in the region by:
 - Reviewing whether the US should impose sanctions on Azerbaijani officials directly involved in war crimes and human rights abuses since the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War.
 - Prohibiting any US military assistance for Azerbaijan.
 - Reviewing whether the US should provide security assistance to Armenia.
- We must send a clear message to the people Armenia that the United States stands with them as they pivot West and away from Russia's grasp.

Continued Support for Ukraine

- Vladimir Putin is a war criminal and Russia is a mob syndicate masquerading as a country.
- Ukraine is valiantly defending itself against Russian aggression.

TESTIMONY: 2024 House Armed Services Member Day Priorities

Rep. Jim Costa | Word Count: 599 words

- The US must continue to provide its full support to Ukraine, including robust security assistance for as long as it takes Ukraine to win this war.

CONCLUSION

- To further continue to grow the best, strongest military in the world – we need to invest in our brave service men and women who are on the frontlines defending our country.
- Ensuring our servicemembers and their families have the benefits they earned and deserve.
- We also need to invest in science and technology competitiveness for next-generation capabilities in hypersonics, electronic warfare, and artificial intelligence.
- Our allies depend on our support and leadership during times of crisis. This is the test of our time. We must rise to meet it.

CONGRESSMAN JOE NEGUSE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEMBERS DAY TESTIMONY
April 11, 2024

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members of the House Armed Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the upcoming Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). As you work to finalize the House version of the FY25 NDAA, I request that you include the following provisions, each of which support our national security, and would support our veterans and federal wildland firefighters, improving housing and health standards for our service members, and increase funds for national security research and development.

The Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act (H.R.3437), a bill which passed the House five times, including most recently in the FY23 NDAA, would preserve approximately 420,000 acres of public land in Colorado and honors the 10th Mountain Division and the legacy of local WWII veteran Sandy Treat. The public lands protected in the CORE Act are important to all Americans, including sportsmen and ranchers, and help to sustain Colorado's \$28 billion outdoor recreation economy. After years of collaboration, careful consultation, and negotiation, the CORE Act enjoys the full support of seven counties, 12 cities and towns, the State of Colorado, and countless outdoor businesses, sportsmen, conservation, and recreation organizations. Given the broad support for this bill and its inclusion in the FY21, FY22, and FY23 House-passed NDAAs, I urge you to include the CORE Act in the final FY25 NDAA.

I would also like to mention two provisions to support our federal wildland firefighters, both of which have passed the House in previous NDAAs. **The Housing Our Firefighters Act** would establish a housing stipend for federal wildland firefighters, hired at a location more than 50 miles from their primary residence, and **the Care for Our Firefighters Act** would secure mental health programs for federal wildland firefighters, including a mental health awareness campaign, peer-to-peer support network, expansion of the Critical Incident Stress Management Program, mental health leave, and making sure that trauma-informed mental health professionals are available to provide their services. In addition to those two priorities, I request that you include the text of **H.R.5153** in the final version of the upcoming FY25 NDAA. This bill would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to administer a pilot program to employ veterans in positions that relate to federal wildland firefighting activities. This increase in public demand and expectations placed on wildland firefighters is only expected to exponentially increase in the coming years. Maintaining this workforce is of the utmost importance to our national security.

Our veterans, servicemembers, and first responders put their lives on the line to serve our country. It's incumbent that we provide access to programs that ensure their ability to support themselves and their families upon returning from service. I would like the Committee to consider including the bipartisan **HUBS for Veterans Act** (H.R.3720), to support local "network hubs" which streamline access to essential resources for veterans, servicemembers, and their families. I have worked in consultation with the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Education & Labor to ensure the bill's

inclusion in the FY2022, FY2023, and FY2024 House-passed NDAA's. The bipartisan **Military Housing Wait Times Accountability Act** (H.R.5972) would require the Secretary of Defense to provide housing accommodations for members of the Armed Forces and their dependents who are on military housing waitlists. **The Further Strengthening Supply Chains for Servicemembers and Security Act** (H.R.5151) and **Tricare Quality Improvement Act** (H.R.5150) work in tandem to evaluate Tricare beneficiary access to quality network pharmacies. I applauded the committee for including all four of these important provisions in the House-passed FY24 NDAA, but I was disappointed to see that, at the insistence of the Senate, the legislation was not included in the final conference report. For those who have stepped up to serve, we must ensure we are fulfilling our commitment to ensure access to adequate health care, housing, and job training opportunities when they return home.

Finally, I request the committee include two amendments related to research and development that I plan to submit during the upcoming floor process. For more than 70 years, the technological superiority of the United States military has offset the size or geographic advantages of potential adversaries. The rapid evolution of space as a contested military domain requires accelerated development of new technologies and approaches to keep pace with growing threats. I request that the committee authorize \$20 million for the University Consortium for Space Technology. This consortium supports the U.S. Space Force's mission through collaborative research on space-related technology problems, technology transition, and workforce development. Similarly, the Arctic and North Atlantic have rapidly evolved into contested military domains requiring continued research to maintain and improve understanding of the changing dynamics. I request the committee include language to establish the University Centers for Arctic National Security Studies and authorize \$10 million to support its creation. To fully leverage existing capabilities at academic institutions the Committee must support these initiatives to maintain U.S. leadership by translating research into evidence-based policy and training the next-generation workforce.

In closing, thank you Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding some of my NDAA priorities. I look forward to working with the committee on these issues and many more.

Sincerely,

Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

CONGRESSWOMAN MARCY KAPTUR

HASC Members Day Testimony

April 11, 2024

REP. KAPTUR: “Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your Committee today and I look forward to working with you on these proposals. As a Member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, I am grateful for our Committees’ partnership in ensuring the selfless members of our armed forces have the tools they need to defend our country against all enemies, foreign and domestic, and that they are afforded the benefits earned through their faithful service when they return home.

I wish to again address an issue for which I seek inclusion as your Committee develops the 2025 Defense Authorizing bill – namely, to strike a new Service Medal entitled the “Last Servicemember Standing.” I seek your Committee’s authorization for the Department of Defense to

design, establish, and implement mechanisms to facilitate the issuance of a new service medal that recognizes the exceptional bravery and valor of the “Last Servicemember Standing.” For too many of America’s most valorous servicemembers never receive the recognition their sacrifices deserve.

Service medals are a timeless means by which the American people recognize acts of valor that our servicemembers engage in on behalf of our nation. However, currently the Department of Defense requires that valor or heroism award recommendations include statements from eyewitnesses. This completely excludes our warriors who find themselves as the last surviving members of their unit in battle against our nation’s foes. For these exceptional heroes, the existing regulation simply makes no sense.

To address this gap in recognition of our nation’s servicemembers, Rep. Judge Carter and I introduced H.R. 6406, the Last Servicemember Standing Medal Act in November of 2023. This legislation would enable

servicemembers who, as result of combat, were the last surviving member of their unit and demonstrated extraordinary heroism in defense of the United States to be eligible for recognition through the Last Servicemember Standing medal. I truly appreciate your Committee's inclusion of the requirement in last year's NDAA for the Department of Defense to provide a briefing on existing awards and decorations for servicemembers who were the last surviving members of their unit. I look forward to receiving that information to inform the Committee's authorization of the Last Servicemember Standing medal in the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act.

In furtherance of this objective, I have the privilege of sharing Sergeant John Eade's story with your Committee. His story serves as an example of the situation that would warrant the medal I am proposing. Sergeant Eade of Toledo, Ohio served with the Army's Second Battalion, Seventh Cavalry Regiment during the Vietnam War. In November 1965, he and his platoon engaged in fierce combat over two days with the People's Army of Vietnam at landing zone Albany. His meticulous notes

illustrate how at just 21 years old, he as sergeant of his unit led his fire team in ferocious hand to hand combat against numerically superior forces. He sustained lifelong disabling injuries, including grenade and shrapnel wounds to his leg that rendered walking nearly impossible, and bullet wounds to his shoulder, abdomen, and face that resulted in the loss of his eye along with nose impairment. Despite his burns across his entire body and other grievous wounds, Sergeant Eade continued fighting and held his unit's position. Tragically, by the end of the battle, Sergeant Eade was the sole surviving member of his platoon. Left for dead, he was discovered and rescued by US forces days later.

As a result of his unwavering courage and dedication, Sergeant Eade was awarded two Purple Hearts and Bronze Star. Despite the heroic nature of his actions, due to the lack of any living witnesses he was not eligible for a higher level medal. He passed away in 2022 after a lifetime of service, overcoming the challenges posed by his injuries to become chief inspector for the city of Boston.

Separately, I will also take a moment to draw your attention to the importance of military youth programs for the development of key workforces our military depends on and for the recruitment of well-prepared new servicemembers. Starbase is one such example of defense-sponsored educational programs that exposes middle schoolers to STEM coursework enabling them to observe its real-world applications. I strongly support these programs for their contributions to education and workforce development. I encourage the Members of this Committee to explore ways in which we can expand these efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to your Committee today about issues that impact our nation's servicemembers. I look forward to working with you and your staff to incorporate this proposal and enable well-deserved recognition for our nation's finest men and women.

**House Armed Services Committee
Member Day Hearing
Thursday, April 11, 2024**

Testimony of Rep. Mike Levin (CA-49)

Thank you, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith, for the opportunity to submit written testimony. Some of the top priorities that I hear about from my constituents in and around Camp Pendleton are issues that come before this committee, so I am grateful for the opportunity to elevate their voices.

As previously Chair, and now Ranking Member, of the House Veterans' Affairs Economic Opportunity Subcommittee, I have remained focused on improving the transition process for service members separating from the military. It is critical that they have effective support to transition into civilian life, and the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is a fundamental part of the process. Many of the veterans who have fallen on hard times are case studies of how we can improve TAP to get and keep veterans employed, housed, and educated. It is no secret that our military is in a recruitment crisis, and there is no better way to show potential recruits the value of military service than every veteran having a good-paying job the day they resume their civilian lives.

I urge the Armed Services Committee to partner with the Veterans' Affairs Committee on improving TAP, which takes place at the crucial juncture between military service and veteran status. The program's success is dependent on close coordination and a warm handoff between the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the committees of jurisdiction must lead by example. While there are many areas ripe for such collaboration, perhaps the most urgent is improving timely participation in TAP.

Section 552 of the *John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2019* required that TAP counseling begin no later than 365 days before transition. Unfortunately, a December 2022 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that nearly 25% of service members in the highest risk level did not attend a mandatory two-day class, and 70% of service members did not start the program at least one year before separation.¹ GAO made several recommendations to rectify these shortfalls, all of which DOD concurred with, yet all remain open. I urge the committee to join me in closely monitoring DOD's implementation of these recommendations and pushing DOD to achieve compliance with the law as soon as possible.

I am aware of the challenges that commanders face in giving their unit members time to prepare for civilian life, while balancing the vast responsibility of providing for our nation's defense. That is why I recommend this committee modernize how we measure unit force structure. No service member should be denied a quality transition because their commander can't spare them for a small amount of time. I suggest the committee consider ways we can backfill these

¹ <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-104538>

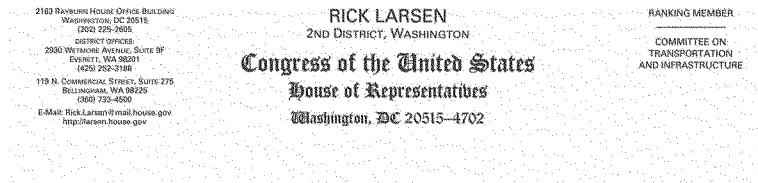
transitioning service members' positions earlier in the process so they can better focus on their stressful transition period.

Another issue that I hear about from my constituents is the need to ensure the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) for service members who live off base is on par with housing costs. Between 2005 and 2015, BAH was calculated to cover 100 percent of local average housing costs. However, the FY2015 NDAA authorized a reduction, and current Department of Defense (DOD) policy provides a BAH intended to cover only 95 percent of local average housing costs. I appreciate that this Committee's FY23 NDAA report expressed concerns regarding housing affordability for service members and encouraged DOD to consider restoring BAH to 100%. As the Department has yet to make this important change, I ask that the Committee require such restoration in statute.

While BAH rates are generally determined annually, Section 605 of the FY2020 NDAA authorized DOD to temporarily adjust BAH mid-year if housing costs differ from BAH rates by more than 20%. This authority was initially granted until September 30, 2022, and later extended to December 31, 2024. I thank the Committee for allowing DOD to respond more quickly to market fluctuations in the costs of adequate housing. However, many of my constituents were distressed to learn that the Camp Pendleton military housing area (MHA) was not included in the 2022 temporary adjustment. This was because average rental costs increased by 17% – still a significant increase that amounts to hundreds of dollars, which military families should not have to foot the bill for. Therefore, I urge the committee to lower the statutory threshold from 20% and make this authority permanent.

I also want to highlight the importance of combatting hunger among our military families. It is unacceptable that a quarter of service members face food insecurity. The men and women who risk their lives for our country should never struggle to put food on the table. That's why I introduced H.R. 5619, the *Military Dependents School Meal Eligibility Act*, which would exclude service members' BAH from the calculation of income when determining eligibility for school meal programs. While we must do more to improve the financial security of those in uniform, this is an important step towards ensuring military parents around Camp Pendleton and across the country can focus on fulfilling their mission rather than on where their kids will find their next meal. I look forward to working with my colleagues across the aisle as we reintroduce this bipartisan bill to enact it into law.

I appreciate the work of this committee in supporting our service members and military families and protecting our national security. Thank you for your attention to the issues I have highlighted.



April 11, 2024

Dear Chair Rogers and Ranking Member Smith,

As a former 20-year member of this Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify on priorities impacting Washington state's 2nd Congressional District and the United States' national security.

Support Jet Noise Reduction Efforts

In communities surrounding military installations, jet noise from flight operations is a frequent concern. In previous NDAA's, I have secured funding for jet noise reduction, and I have supported legislation to expand sound monitoring, reduce engine noise in private homes and reduce future training flights - all while maintaining training standards. In my district, the sailors at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island are working to reduce the impact of flight operations on surrounding communities. I request this Committee continues to support jet noise reduction research and requirements for new military aircraft.

Cryopreservation Pilot Program

America's women and men in uniform sacrifice greatly. They should not have to sacrifice their dreams of having a family. I am pleased that the Department of Defense recently announced it is expanding fertility treatments for more veterans. However, Congress must do more to help veterans and servicemembers who struggle with having children build a family. Establishing a pilot program to cryopreserve gametes prior to training and deployments would enable servicemembers to choose to have a family should a dramatic injury occur. I ask that all members support this effort to help veterans and servicemembers start a family.

Constellation (FFG-62) Class Frigate

The Navy's new Constellation Class Frigates, crucial in addressing the challenges posed by the pacing threat in the Pacific, play a pivotal role in safeguarding global trade routes. Regrettably, the Navy has announced a potential 3-year delay in the delivery of the frigate, a delay that could have significant implications due to lead ship problems, supply chain issues, and a shortage of skilled workers. Naval Station Everett preparing to homeport 12 frigates, any delay in the delivery schedule significantly affects the cost of preparations and crew staffing required to support the frigates at the base. I ask the committee to continue funding the construction of the Constellation Class Frigates and conduct oversight over the Navy to ensure it addresses the problems with the lead ship.

AI Education for Servicemembers

The world has already seen the effect artificial intelligence (AI) can have with OpenAI's ChatGPT and the rise of deepfakes. To prepare for future wars, to improve administrative efficiency and promote the ethical use of AI, junior officers and enlisted ranks need to have access to this AI education. The DoD should encourage its servicemembers to use AI to solve problems and create efficiency, not solely to counter the "kill chain." I request the Committee require the DoD to establish an AI education program for all ranks, officers and enlisted, to ensure all servicemembers understand the concepts and ethics of AI.

NATO Innovation Fund

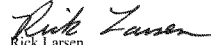
As a member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and a supporter of federal investment in emerging technology, I have long supported the NATO Innovation Fund (NIF). The NIF directly invests \$1 billion in start-ups to improve advancements and interoperability in artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, energy & propulsion, manufacturing, and space. Unless the United States is authorized to participate in the NIF, U.S. companies will remain barred from accessing the \$1 billion of existing funds raised by NATO allies. I ask the Committee to support emerging technology and NATO by authorizing the U.S. to participate in the NIF.

IT Modernization in the Military

During the NDAA markup, committee members will vote digitally on amendments and the final passage of the FY25 NDAA. In stark contrast, servicemembers are still burdened with archaic paperwork, having to fill out stacks of forms to reenlist, accept orders, request duty assignments, conduct courts-martial, and check into a new unit. Existing DoD digital systems are not designed to process these tasks and remain isolated from each other, hindering the sharing of data and information that would improve workflow and records management for servicemembers. Without modern IT systems, the potential of AI to significantly enhance military operations and improve the quality of life for our servicemembers remains untapped. By investing in IT modernization, Congress can pave the way for a future where administrative tasks are streamlined, allowing servicemembers to focus on their core duties. I ask the Committee to include a provision in the NDAA authorizing funds for IT modernization for the military to improve administrative tasks and prepare for AI applications in non-battlefield environments.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my priorities for inclusion in the Fiscal Year 2025 NDAA.

Sincerely,



Rick Larsen
U.S. Representative
Washington State, Second District

**Statement of Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott
Member Day Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act
Before the Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Thursday, April 11, 2024**

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the Committee, as you begin to draft the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025, I ask that you consider a number of priorities that would benefit not just my congressional district and the Commonwealth of Virginia, but the entire nation.

Military installation resiliency is one of the most pressing priorities that the Department of Defense (DoD) must address moving forward. Virginia’s third congressional district is home to Naval Station Norfolk, Joint Base Langley Eustis, Norfolk Naval Shipyard and the Portsmouth Naval Hospital. Each of these critical military installations are on or near the water and are at risk to persistent and recurring flooding, as well as to the long-term threats of sea level rise driven by both subsidence and climate change. That is why I was proud to sponsor the *Enhancing Military Base Resilience and Conserving Ecosystems through Stormwater Management Act* (or *EMBRACE Stormwater Management Act*), which was ultimately included the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022.

The *EMBRACE Act* authorized DoD to implement various stormwater projects on or near military installations to improve resiliency and limit the impacts of flooding. This was a critical step towards requiring DoD to prioritize stormwater projects at military installations in flood prone and climate change vulnerable communities to protect these installations. Unfortunately, two years since its enactment, DoD has not implemented the *EMBRACE Act* in line with congressional intent. I respectfully request strong stormwater provisions in this year’s NDAA, including language that clarifies allowable use for prioritized projects dealing with runoff minimization, installation and defense access road protection, and aquifers. I also support the establishment of a Military Installation Resilience Project Acceleration Program that can be used to assist in the planning and implementation of critical installation resilience projects.

I was pleased that the pilot program for Interagency Regional Coordinators for Resilience (IRCR) was enacted through Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA. While the law requires four sites for the coordinators to be located, to date, only one has been appointed. I encourage the committee to consider language to move the appointment of the additional three coordinators along.

I have been encouraged to see strong suicide prevention measures included in recent NDAAs, and I ask that this continue for FY25. My congressional district is home to Newport News Shipbuilding and Naval Station Norfolk where there has been a wave of service-connected suicides. Ensuring that our servicemembers, veterans and their families have the tools and support required to combat suicidality, depression, and mental illness should be one of our highest priorities. In the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2023 I was proud to sponsor an adopted

amendment that requires the Inspector General to compile a report regarding instances of suicide, suicide attempts, and suicidal ideation among Navy servicemembers, including an assessment of Navy mental health teams, commander responses, and challenges that stand in the way of sailors receiving the care and treatment they deserve. According to a provision in last year's NDAA, that report is due on September 30 of this year, and I await its publication and encourage the Committee to ensure that the Department meets its deadlines. I would also like to take this opportunity to draw attention to good work being done in this vein in my district. The Virginia General Assembly included in the state biennial budget the Commonwealth's \$40 million cost-share to support the Navy's effort to build housing that is desperately needed near Newport News Shipbuilding. Lack of off-ship housing has been identified as a risk factor for suicide among enlisted sailors onboard the *USS George Washington* during its midlife refueling and overhaul at Newport News. I applaud any effort by the Committee to further support and supplement the Navy's efforts to increase housing availability to addresses these quality of life issues for our servicemembers in the forthcoming NDAA.

With regard to shipbuilding, I was disheartened to see the Navy request advance procurement funds for only one Virginia class submarine in FY25. I sent a letter to President Biden prior to the release of his budget requesting that DoD change course and support the standard two-year-per procurement schedule that our national security requires and that our shipbuilding industrial base have come to expect to maintain adequate workloads and production schedules. My congressional district in Hampton Roads is a proud shipbuilding community, and our shipbuilding and ship-repair workforce relies on consistent government policy and funding in these matters. While I am grateful that the budget still requested robust funding for the Ford class aircraft carrier and Columbia class submarine programs, I ask the Committee to maintain the two Virginia class submarine buy that has been consistent for years in the FY25 NDAA.

Finally, I wanted to bring to the committee's attention the service and sacrifice of a sailor from my district. I recently learned of David Walker, a nineteen-year-old sailor from Norfolk, Virginia who volunteered to serve and tragically lost his life aboard the *USS California* during the attack on Pearl Harbor of December 7, 1941. Mr. Walker's remains were identified just a few weeks ago by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. I commend DoD's efforts to identify the remains of servicemembers missing in action and it is a testament to their commitment that no servicemember be left behind that they continue to work to identify the remains of those missing in action at the dawn of America entering World War II. My office is in the early stages of exploring how we can best recognize and honor this brave Virginian's service and sacrifice, and I would appreciate any support that the Committee can provide in this effort.

I thank the Committee again for its consideration of my views and priorities as you begin the difficult and critical work of preparing this year's National Defense Authorization Act.

Congresswoman Stacey E. Plaskett
House Committee on Armed Services
National Defense Authorization Act Member Day Testimony
April 11, 2024

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the upcoming Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

The annual NDAA keeps the United States' defense apparatus robust and responsive to both present and future threats. The NDAA provides the opportunity to support our servicemembers and veterans and confront the greatest threats to our national security. I respectfully request that the committee favorably consider the following proposals for inclusion in the FY25 NDAA.

Authorization of Basic Allowance for Housing in the U.S. Virgin Islands

I request the FY25 NDAA include language to authorize the basic allowance for housing (BAH) for members of the uniformed services in the U.S. Virgin Islands. A high proportion of U.S. Virgin Islands residents serve in the U.S. military. Notably, the U.S. Virgin Islands boasts the highest percentage of women in the uniformed service among states and territories.

The current disparity lies in the Department of Defense providing only the overseas housing allowance to uniformed service personnel in the U.S. Virgin Islands. This treats the U.S. Virgin Islands as if it were a sovereign foreign nation. National Guard members in the 50 states and DC receive a flat-rate lump sum from the BAH program for housing and utilities, whereas U.S. Virgin Islands National Guard members receive reimbursements for housing and utilities through the overly burdensome and flawed OHA program.

According to a Department of Defense report submitted to Congress in June 2013, a flat-rate program for the U.S. Virgin Islands would lead to an "improved quality of life" at an estimated increased monthly cost of \$42,000, amounting to less than \$1 million annually. The Department of Defense report also noted that the transition would only be beneficial to the U.S. Virgin Islands, and as such should only be considered for the U.S. Virgin Islands.

TRICARE for the U.S. Virgin Islands

There are few places in the United States with higher per capita rates of military service than the U.S. Virgin Islands. Despite this, veterans in the U.S. Virgin Islands do not receive the same benefits as their counterparts residing in the 50 states. Veterans in the U.S. Virgin Islands are unable to utilize TRICARE Prime, which prohibits medical retirees and certain family members from accessing TRICARE in the same way as the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

I request the FY25 NDAA include language to ensure eligible servicemembers in the U.S. Virgin Islands receive the same TRICARE benefits as similarly situated service members in the 50 states.

Report on the Impact of African Coups

I am increasingly concerned by the ongoing instability in Africa. China's Belt and Road investments, Russia's Wagner Group, and other actors are using the cycles of coups across the

continent as a vehicle to effectuate influence and control. In the past 10 years, successful coups have occurred in Burkina Faso twice, Sudan three times, Mali twice, as well as in Chad, Guinea, Niger, and Gabon. Further attempted coups have occurred in many of these nations, in addition to The Gambia and Sierra Leone. The Annual Threat Assessment has indicated internal turmoil in this region will continue in the coming year.

I request the FY25 NDAA include an assessment, with classified and unclassified sections, on the impact of cyclical coups on long-term instability in the region as it relates to United States security interests, regional multi-state organizations, regional access to global markets, and the impact of sub-state actors on global security. It is critical that we understand the conduct of China and other nefarious actors in the region. This information will inform an effective strategy to counter hostile foreign engagement, which bolsters undemocratic regimes and further depletes nations' resources.

Sense of Congress Supporting Haiti's Stability

Following the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse on July 7th 2021, our Caribbean neighbor has faced a humanitarian catastrophe. The United States cannot take an apathetic approach to Haiti, which faces complete control by gangs, endemic poverty, and violence. A multinational security support mission to Haiti with global partners including Kenya aligns with United States national security interests. It is critical that we bolster Haiti's development of a long-term stabilization plan.

I request the FY25 NDAA include language to express the sense of Congress that the stability of Haiti is vital to the Caribbean and United States and as such, a secure and prosperous Haiti is in our national and global interest.

Report on the Impact of China, Russia and its Proxies in Africa and the Caribbean

I request the inclusion of language to direct the Department of Defense to assess the impact of China and Russia's malign influence in Africa, South America, Central America, and the Caribbean on national security and economic interests of the United States. This builds upon my amendment included in the FY23 NDAA, which directed the Department of Defense to assess the standing U.S. military force posture in the Caribbean, given U.S. national and regional security interests in the region.

The continued expansion of Russian and Chinese influence threatens the national security, economic prosperity, and democratic values of the United States. Russia has exploited the instability of African nations to secure access to valuable resources and in turn, undermine democratic aspirations. China's economic investments and financial assistance target vulnerable countries in the region and carry collateral conditions, including diplomatic expectations. We must recognize the expansion of Chinese and Russian influence to the Caribbean, South America, Central America, and Africa – and the importance of the U.S. national security apparatus.

Report on the Strategic Value of Caribbean Undersea Cable Networks

In furtherance of my FY23 NDAA request for an assessment of the development of a trans-Atlantic submarine fiber optic cable connecting the United States, United States Virgin Islands, Ghana, and Nigeria, I would like the FY25 NDAA to include a holistic assessment on the strategic value of undersea telecommunications connecting the United States to South America, Central America,

the Caribbean, and Mexico. This report should include assessments of the lifespan of existing links between the United States and nations in the region as well as recommendations for future strategic investments in the development of telecommunications infrastructure in South America, Central America, the Caribbean, and Mexico.

As China gains geopolitical and economic influence in Africa and the Caribbean, we must protect the United States' national security data and communication interests, while providing provide economic advantages to the United States and its diaspora community partners.

Thank you for your consideration of my priorities. I ask that the committee favorably consider these requests as it drafts the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act.

To: House Armed Services Committee
Date: Wednesday, April 10, 2024
From: The Honorable Sylvia R. Garcia (D-TX-29)
Re: Member Testimony for HASC Member Day on Thursday, April 11, 2024

Thank you, Mr. Chair, Ranking Member, and Committee Members for the opportunity to provide written testimony to the House Armed Services Committee as part of today's Member Day.

This is a critical opportunity for Members of the House of Representatives to help shape the priorities of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2025.

Our service members represent the best of our country.

As members of Congress, it is our duty to ensure Americans who have served, are currently serving, and will serve our nation in the future as part of the military, are kept safe and honored for their service.

It is why throughout my time in Congress I have been laser-focused on tackling sexual violence in the U.S. military – one of the biggest challenges facing our women and men in uniform.

I have done so in honor of my constituent Vanessa Guillen, a 20-year-old Latina soldier who was the victim of sexual harassment in the Army and was violently murdered by a fellow soldier in 2020 in an armory at Fort Cavazos, formerly named Fort Hood.

Her story and legacy, which has been bravely carried forward by her loving family, inspired the #IAmVanessaGuillen movement – a clarion call to change how cases of sexual violence are adjudicated in the military.

Because of Vanessa's story and her family's tenacity, this body joined several of my colleagues and I in legislating and overseeing improvements to protect our servicemembers and prevent sexual assault and abuse, namely removing the adjudication of sexual assault and harassment cases out of the chain of command.

However, many of our kids who aspire to one day join the military are still at risk.

In July 2022, the New York Times released an article that uncovered the sexual abuse of teens in the Military's Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program and reported 33 JROTC instructors had been criminally charged.

The U.S. Department of Defense then acknowledge an unprecedented 58 instances of sexual abuse within the JROTC program since 2017.

Let that number sink in.

Cadets enrolled in JROTC programs face the unique challenges of a particularly uneven power dynamic, with their adult instructors also serving as their "commanding officers.

As a result, predators can leverage these power dynamics to coerce young victims and commit acts of sexual violence.

According to the Child Molestation Research and Prevention Institute, 95% of sexual abuse is preventable through education.

That means direct access to sexual abuse prevention training is the most effective method to help address this problem and help protect our cadets who dream of nothing more than serving our nation in the military.

As Members of Congress, we have the power to help put an end to this abuse and to help protect our kids. We owe them to do everything we can to help protect them.

As we undergo this year's process for the Fiscal Year 2025 NDAA, I look forward to working with members of this esteemed committee to ensure my bipartisan bill H.R. 2711, the Shielding America's Youth From Exploitation (SAYFE) Act, is included as a provision in the final package that both chambers of Congress ultimately pass.

My bill would require the U.S. Department of Defense to provide annual, age-appropriate, sexual assault and abuse prevention trainings to JROTC cadets. Further, it ensures that the JROTC instructor cannot also provide the annual training.

The lack of protection for these young women and men is not only a moral failing, but it also undermines our military readiness at a time when the United States is already suffering from a recruitment crisis across the Armed Forces.

Our nation cannot afford to see a program as important as JROTC undermined and disgraced by growing accounts of sexual abuse.

Congress has a fundamental duty to protect these kids, and my bill will help do just that.

I am grateful for the opportunity to share this critical priority for the committee's consideration, and I encourage all members of this committee to work with me to ensure we address this glaring problem in this year's NDAA.

Thank you.

