

119<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
2<sup>D</sup> SESSION

# H. R. 7323

To require the Secretary of Defense to establish a network of regional hubs to foster innovation, collaboration, and rapid development of defense-related technologies, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 3, 2026

Mr. BELL (for himself, Ms. ROSS, Mr. HUDSON, and Mr. MESSMER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

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## A BILL

To require the Secretary of Defense to establish a network of regional hubs to foster innovation, collaboration, and rapid development of defense-related technologies, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Defense Technology  
5 Hubs Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. PURPOSE.**

7 The purpose of this Act is to enhance national secu-  
8 rity and technological superiority by requiring the Sec-

1 retary of Defense to establish a network of regional de-  
2 fense technology hubs to foster innovation, collaboration,  
3 and rapid development of defense-related technologies to  
4 attract talent from across the United States.

5 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

6 In this Act:

7 (1) ANCHOR FEDERAL DEFENSE INSTITU-  
8 TION.—The term “anchor Federal defense institu-  
9 tion” means a defense manufacturing facility, an in-  
10 stitution of higher education that engages the De-  
11 partment on research, development, testing, and  
12 evaluation, or a military installation.

13 (2) DEFENSE TECHNOLOGY HUB.—The term  
14 “defense technology hub” means a regional hub des-  
15 ignated and supported under the Program.

16 (3) ELIGIBLE CONSORTIUM.—The term “eligi-  
17 ble consortium” means a consortium composed of  
18 universities, defense contractors, small businesses,  
19 nonprofit organizations, independent research enti-  
20 ties, and State or local governments.

21 (4) EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES.—The term  
22 “emerging technologies” means scientific and engi-  
23 neering advancements with potential military appli-  
24 cations as identified by the Secretary of Defense.

1           (5) PROGRAM.—The term “Program” means  
2           the Defense Technology Hubs Program established  
3           under section 4(a).

4 **SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF DEFENSE TECHNOLOGY HUBS**  
5 **PROGRAM.**

6           (a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—

7           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense  
8           shall establish a program to designate and support  
9           regional hubs focused on advancing defense tech-  
10          nologies critical to national security.

11          (2) DESIGNATION.—The program established  
12          pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be known as the  
13          “Defense Technology Hubs Program”.

14          (b) DESIGNATION OF DEFENSE TECHNOLOGY  
15          HUBS.—

16          (1) SOLICITATION OF APPLICATIONS.—Under  
17          the Program, the Secretary shall solicit applications  
18          from eligible consortia to be designated as defense  
19          technology hubs under the Program.

20          (2) SUBMITTAL OF APPLICATIONS.—A consor-  
21          tium seeking designation and support as a regional  
22          hub under subsection (a)(1) shall submit to the Sec-  
23          retary an application therefor at such time, in such  
24          manner, and containing such information as the Sec-  
25          retary may require.

1           (3) CRITERIA.—The Secretary shall select eligi-  
2           ble consortia for designation and support under sub-  
3           section (a)(1) from among those submitting applica-  
4           tions pursuant to paragraph (2) of this subsection  
5           using the following criteria:

6                   (A) Demonstrated capability in defense-rel-  
7                   evant technology areas.

8                   (B) Evidence of regional collaboration and  
9                   stakeholder commitment.

10                  (C) Presence of anchor Federal defense in-  
11                  stitutions or mission-critical installations of the  
12                  Department that support or are early adopters  
13                  of emerging defense technologies, such as  
14                  geospatial intelligence, data fusion, artificial in-  
15                  telligence, autonomy, edge networking and com-  
16                  puting, human-machine teaming, and quantum.

17                  (D) Existence of regional innovation eco-  
18                  systems with demonstrated success in  
19                  leveraging Federal, State, and private sector  
20                  collaboration, such as technology innovation  
21                  consortia, academic research clusters, and spe-  
22                  cialized defense accelerators.

23                  (E) Demonstrated success in developing  
24                  partnerships and collaborative arrangements  
25                  with local Federal defense institutions and mis-

1 mission-critical installations for the purposes of ad-  
2 vancing research, development, prototyping, and  
3 transition of emerging defense technologies.

4 (F) Demonstrated success in developing  
5 partnership and collaborative arrangements  
6 with Federal defense institutions and mission-  
7 critical installations in workforce development  
8 and training programs to build a skilled pipe-  
9 line for defense innovation.

10 (E) Potential to address Department-iden-  
11 tified strategic priorities.

12 (F) Economic and workforce development  
13 impact.

14 (4) GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION.—

15 (A) IN GENERAL.—In selecting eligible  
16 consortia for designation and support under the  
17 Program, the Secretary shall ensure that de-  
18 fense technology hubs are distributed—

19 (i) across diverse geographic regions  
20 of the United States, with a goal of desig-  
21 nating at least 10 defense technology hubs  
22 before the date that is 3 years after the  
23 date of the enactment of this Act; and

24 (ii) to regions in which eligible con-  
25 sortia are co-located with, or readily acces-

1           sible to, multiple facilities of the Depart-  
2           ment, including mission-critical installa-  
3           tions, to maximize collaboration between  
4           eligible consortia and the Department of  
5           Defense.

6           (B) PREFERENCE.—In considering geo-  
7           graphic distribution, the Secretary may give  
8           preference to regions with demonstrated stra-  
9           tegic relevance to national security missions, in-  
10          cluding those with newly constructed or ex-  
11          panded Department facilities and intelligence  
12          community investments.

13          (c) OBJECTIVES OF DEFENSE TECHNOLOGY  
14          HUBS.—The objectives of a defense technology hub under  
15          the Program are as follows:

16               (1) To accelerate the research, development,  
17               prototyping, and transition to operational use of  
18               emerging technologies intended for military applica-  
19               tions, such as artificial intelligence, edge networking  
20               and computing, quantum technologies, human-ma-  
21               chine teaming, hypersonics, biotechnology, and ad-  
22               vanced manufacturing.

23               (2) To foster partnerships among components  
24               of the Department of Defense, private industry, aca-  
25               demic institutions, and State and local governments.

1           (3) To address regional defense technology  
2 needs while leveraging local expertise, infrastructure,  
3 and economic strengths, including proximity to Fed-  
4 eral mission partners such as combat support agen-  
5 cies and participation in existing innovation con-  
6 sortia or university-industry alliances.

7           (4) To promote workforce development and  
8 training programs to build a skilled pipeline for de-  
9 fense innovation including partnerships with re-  
10 search universities, community colleges, and voca-  
11 tional programs.

12           (5) To enhance the resilience and security of  
13 the defense industrial base.

14 (d) GRANTS.—

15           (1) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—Under the Pro-  
16 gram, the Secretary may award grants to defense  
17 technology hubs.

18           (2) USE OF FUNDS.—A defense technology hub  
19 receiving a grant under paragraph (1) shall use the  
20 amounts of the grant for the following purposes:

21           (A) As seed funding for establishment of  
22 the defense technology hub.

23           (B) For research, prototyping, and tech-  
24 nology transition projects consistent with the  
25 objectives set forth in subsection (c).

1 (C) Administrative and evaluation expenses  
2 of the defense technology hub relating activities  
3 under the Program.

4 (D) Establishing and maintaining required  
5 security and compliance systems and functions.

6 (e) SECURITY AND COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—Under the Program, each  
8 defense technology hub shall do the following:

9 (A) Implement cybersecurity measures con-  
10 sistent with Department cybersecurity stand-  
11 ards.

12 (B) Ensure all research and technology  
13 transfers comply with the International Traffic  
14 in Arms Regulations (ITAR) and the Export  
15 Administration Regulations (EAR).

16 (C) Prevent participation by foreign enti-  
17 ties of concern, as identified by the Secretary in  
18 coordination with the heads of the elements of  
19 the intelligence community (as defined in sec-  
20 tion 3 of the National Security Act of 1947 (50  
21 U.S.C. 3003)) or identified in the Entity List  
22 maintained by the Bureau of Industry and Se-  
23 curity of the Department of Commerce and set  
24 forth in Supplement No. 4 to part 744 of title

1           15, Code of Federal Regulations, and consistent  
2           with existing Federal designations.

3           (D) Establish mechanisms to prevent un-  
4           authorized access to sensitive defense-related  
5           research and technology.

6           (E) Establish necessary programs, infra-  
7           structure, and processes to sponsor, obtain, and  
8           hold security clearances for the purposes of en-  
9           abling classified research, development, and  
10          prototyping of emerging defense technologies.

11          (2) MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT.—The  
12          Secretary shall, in coordination with the Director of  
13          the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agen-  
14          cy, establish procedures to monitor and enforce com-  
15          pliance with the requirements set forth in paragraph  
16          (1).

17          (f) INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT.—

18           (1) GUIDELINES REQUIRED.—The Secretary  
19           shall develop guidelines under the Program for intel-  
20           lectual property ownership and licensing within the  
21           defense technology hubs, balancing national security  
22           needs with commercial incentives for private sector  
23           participation.

24           (2) RETENTION OF RIGHTS.—The guidelines  
25           developed pursuant to paragraph (1) shall include

1 provisions for the Department to retain necessary  
2 rights for defense applications while allowing mem-  
3 bers of consortia that are defense technology hubs to  
4 pursue commercial opportunities as may be appro-  
5 priate.

6 (g) FUNDING.—

7 (1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

8 There is authorized to be appropriated to the De-  
9 partment of Defense to carry out the Program  
10 \$375,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2026  
11 through 2030.

12 (2) AVAILABILITY.—Of the amounts appro-

13 priated pursuant to the authorization in paragraph  
14 (1), \$75,000,000 shall be available to the Secretary  
15 to award grants under subsection (d).

16 (3) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of

17 support provided to a defense technology hub under  
18 the Program in a fiscal year may not exceed 50 per-  
19 cent of the total cost of the operations and activities  
20 of the defense technology hub under the Program in  
21 that fiscal year.

22 (h) ADMINISTRATION.—

23 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall admin-

24 ister the Program through the Under Secretary of  
25 Defense for Research and Engineering, acting

1 through the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Crit-  
2 ical Technologies and in coordination with the Direc-  
3 tor of the Defense Innovation Unit and the heads of  
4 such other elements of the Department as the Sec-  
5 retary considers appropriate.

6 (2) WAIVER OF ACQUISITION REGULATIONS.—  
7 For any project of a defense technology hub under  
8 the Program that the Secretary determines has a  
9 total cost of less than \$10,000,000, the Secretary  
10 may waive applicable acquisition regulations to expe-  
11 dite development and prototyping, consistent with  
12 similar authorities of the Secretary that were in ef-  
13 fect on the day before the date of the enactment of  
14 this Act.

15 (3) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS.—Each de-  
16 fense technology hub shall, not less frequently than  
17 once each year, submit to the Secretary an annual  
18 progress report detailing technological advance-  
19 ments, partnerships, and economic outcomes.

20 **SEC. 5. COORDINATION WITH EXISTING PROGRAM.**

21 The Secretary of Defense shall ensure the Program  
22 complements, and does not duplicate, existing efforts such  
23 as efforts of the Defense Advanced Research Projects  
24 Agency (DARPA), the Manufacturing USA Institutes, the  
25 Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs of the Eco-

1 nomic Development Administration (EDA), the Defense  
2 Innovation Unit (DIU), and the Regional Innovation En-  
3 gines of the National Science Foundation. The Secretary  
4 shall, as the Secretary determines appropriate, align de-  
5 fense technology hub activities with existing defense and  
6 intelligence infrastructure to maximize the use of estab-  
7 lished mission platforms and reduce redundant invest-  
8 ments, particularly in areas where new Federal campuses  
9 are designed to serve as long-term anchors for defense in-  
10 novation ecosystems.

11 **SEC. 6. EVALUATION AND REPORTING.**

12 (a) INDEPENDENT EVALUATIONS.—The Secretary of  
13 Defense shall seek to enter into a contract with an inde-  
14 pendent entity to evaluate the effectiveness of the Pro-  
15 gram annually for the first 5 years of the Program, and  
16 biennially thereafter, assessing technology outputs, na-  
17 tional security impacts, and return on investment.

18 (b) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not less frequently than  
19 once each year, the Secretary shall submit to the Com-  
20 mittee on Armed Services of the Senate and the Com-  
21 mittee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives  
22 an annual report detailing Program activities, defense  
23 technology hub performance, and recommendations for  
24 improvement to the Program.

1 **SEC. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

2       The provisions of this Act shall take effect on the  
3 date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of  
4 this Act.

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