

Union and other international entities to effectively counter the atrocities of this organization.

The Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1084 directs the Secretary of Defense to submit to Congress a report on the actions taken to protect members of the Armed Forces of the United States from armed attacks conducted by militants and terrorists in pursuit of bounties and inducements by the agencies, organizations, or entities aligned with the Russian Federation.

In 2020, there were reports that Russia was placing bounties on American soldiers.

Although these reports have not been confirmed, we must be prepared to contend with such threats.

The lives of our Armed Forces should be valued and protected from our Nation's adversaries.

It is important that we use our resources to ensure the safety and well-being of America's service members, as their bravery and valor are vital for America's success. It is our duty to ensure that our troops can return to their families.

That is why I introduced an amendment to ensure that a report is made detailing the actions taken to protect Armed Forces members from armed attacks. Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1084 would have ensured that we take a stand against attacks on our military and continue to protect men and women serving this country.

The Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1099 requires the Secretary of Defense to report to Congress on the programs and procedures employed to ensure students studying abroad through Department of Defense National Security Education Programs are trained to recognize, resist, and report against recruitment efforts by agents of foreign governments.

Tens of thousands of American students study abroad each year, with hundreds of them going through the Department of Defense's National Security Education Programs.

This past year, the National Security Education Program enrolled 108 Boren fellows and 210 Boren scholars, in addition to those enrolled in the organization's seven other study abroad programs. Protecting these students in their time abroad is a priority; hence, the need for the Secretary of Defense to ensure students know how to detect foreign intelligence and recruitment efforts.

Generating awareness about risks that study abroad students could face overseas will safeguard America from being targeted by foreign governments. Security measures offered by my amendment, Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1099, would have continued to protect America's future by preventing foreign intelligence services from acquiring tools to inflict harm on America.

The Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1108 requires the Secretary of Defense to evaluate the threat to national security posed by domestic terrorist groups and organizations motivated by a belief system of white supremacy.

Since 2010, white supremacists have carried out at least 17 lethal attacks, resulting in no fewer than 77 deaths. White supremacist attacks account for more than half of all fatalities from domestic terrorism, per the FBI.

As such, the FBI has deemed that white supremacists "pose the primary threat" in domestic terrorism. FBI reports have identified these racially-motivated extremists as part of a

transnational movement facilitated by online networks.

Due to the FBI's assessment of a rising threat of domestic violence rooted in white supremacy, it is essential that Congress be thoroughly informed on this matter.

This amendment and the report it commissions will provide valuable information and an up-to-date, detailed evaluation of the potential domestic violence threat these groups pose moving forward.

In this way, Congress can better create meaningful policy solutions that enshrine national security and safety for all. The Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1108 offered an important proactive approach to combatting domestic terrorism.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 12, 2023

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2670) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2024 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chair, I rise today to speak on the rule for H.R. 2670, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2024.

This is an important measure that for over 60 years, Republicans and Democrats have come together to support investments authorized in the NDAA that will help address the changing global landscape and prepare the country for future challenges and threats.

I along with my colleagues have offered a number of robust and thoughtful amendments in furtherance of a process that has generally been bipartisan work on behalf of America's national defense.

However, I am dismayed that this year, my Republican colleagues in the majority have refused meaningful consideration of the majority of amendments offered by my Democratic colleagues.

While I am grateful that one of my amendments was made in order, the Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1075 (No. 136 as reported in the Rule) and included in the En Bloc package No. 3, it is beyond disappointing and disgraceful that my additional 19 amendments were not made in order—and particularly ones I have offered for many years and have been made in order.

With respect to my amendment that was made in order, I ask for a favorable vote on the En Bloc package No. 3 in support of the Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1075.

The Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1075 would require that a report be submitted within 220 days of the NDAA's passage detailing our national capacity to provide disaster survivors with short term housing.

In the aftermath of emergencies and national disasters, victims have much on their minds.

Homes, properties, businesses, and livelihoods may have been damaged in the disaster,

and families, friends, and community members may be mentally and physically affected by the disaster, not to mention additional challenges as they seek to return to work and school.

As these communities begin to face the long process of recovery and rebuilding, short term housing is one of the first things disaster survivors need to get back on their feet.

Unfortunately, my constituents and I are no stranger to these kinds of disasters.

In 2017, Hurricane Harvey devastated the Houston area, affecting over 100,000 homes across the city. In the aftermath of the storm, finding temporary housing was one of the biggest challenges to recovery for many survivors.

Short-term housing was difficult to coordinate due to the sheer number of Houstonians affected. As such, it is crucial that Congress have a strong understanding of our current capabilities and, specifically, our ability to provide these survivors with short term housing before disaster strikes.

If voted on favorably, this report will not only inform us of our current capacity to provide housing but will also better equip Congress to respond to disasters and support survivors in the future.

In addition to this amendment, I offered the below listed amendments.

The Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1401 requires an annual report on maternal mortality rates for military members and their dependents.

Women make up about 17 percent of the active military population. As such, their specific health needs are a critical piece of force readiness and the well-being of U.S. troops. In order to ensure military readiness, it's important that the full scope of women's health care needs are understood and provided for. The knowledge gained through this report will best equip the creation of meaningful policy and standards of care for women in the military.

Despite generally lower rates of maternal and infant mortality compared with the United States overall, per a 2019 report generated as a result of my request to do so in the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (Public Law 115–232), the continued monitoring and reporting on these rates is crucial and highly relevant—particularly in light of the heightened attacks on women's reproductive health and the recent Supreme Court's decision effectively overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

Maternal and infant health are important indicators of the overall health of a Nation. More than 40 percent of active-duty service women reported a pregnancy since joining the military and 16 percent reported a pregnancy within the prior year. Beyond those directly serving in our military, this report would also support the needs of the pregnant dependents of those in the military and ensure that they also receive the standard of care they deserve. The Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1401 would have ensured a proactive approach to enshrining maternal health, especially for our military families.

Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1403 authorizes a \$10 million increase in funding for increased collaboration with NIH to combat Triple Negative Breast Cancer.

Triple negative breast cancer is a specific strain of breast cancer for which no targeted

treatment is available. The American Cancer Society calls this particular strain of breast cancer “an aggressive subtype associated with lower survival rates.”

I offered this amendment in hopes that through a coordinated effort DOD and NIH can develop a targeted treatment for the triple negative breast cancer strain. Breast cancers with specific, targeted treatment methods, such as hormone and gene-based strains, have higher survival rates than the triple negative subtype, highlighting the need for a targeted treatment.

Breast cancer accounts for 1 in 4 cancer diagnoses among women in this country. It is also the most commonly diagnosed cancer among African American women. The American Cancer society estimated that in 2019, over 33,000 new cases of breast cancer would occur among Black women, with about 6,540 breast cancer deaths expected to die from the disease.

Today, Black women are 40 percent more likely than white women to die from breast cancer. Black women are also 12 percent less likely to survive five years after a breast cancer diagnosis. One reason for this disparity is that African American women are disproportionately affected by triple negative breast cancer.

And in my district, the statistics are even more shocking for Black women. In Houston, the breast cancer death rate for black women is nearly double than average. Several preventable factors contribute to this. Namely, that Black patients are 1.5 times more likely to be uninsured than white patients and are simply unable to obtain and receive access to life-saving treatment. In fact only 54 percent of Black women, in Houston, receive annual breast cancer screenings. This is unacceptable. We must do better in making sure all those inflicted by this deadly cancer have access to treatment and opportunity to live their lives to the fullest.

For these individuals and the tens of thousands of survivors and their daughters the Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1403 is desperately needed.

Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1404 provides authorization for \$2.5 million increase in funding to combat post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

This amendment is intended to address the urgent need for more post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) treatment and counseling facilities servicing veterans living in some of the more distressed areas of our country. We can never do enough to honor our wounded veterans.

The Congressional Research Service puts the number of troops deployed since 2000 suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at nearly 67,000. Rates of PTSD among Veterans are twice as high as PTSD rates among the general population.

Of the six million Veterans served by the VA in Fiscal Year 2021, 10 percent of men and 19 percent of women were diagnosed with PTSD. This number does not take into account those suffering from depression or anxiety.

When wounded troops return home, the treatment they receive is more befitting a second-class citizen than a hero. This is unacceptable for a country that has the resources to provide Veterans and members of the Armed Forces with World Class Care.

In 2013, a three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Depart-

ment of Veterans Affairs treatment of mentally ill veterans is so inadequate, it is unconstitutional. The decision said, “many veterans with severe depression or post-traumatic stress disorder are forced to wait weeks for mental health referrals and are given no opportunity to request or demonstrate their need for expedited care.”

Increasing the number of medical facilities specializing in post-traumatic stress disorder located in underserved urban areas is the first step Congress can take to providing veterans with the services they need.

Access to post-traumatic stress disorder treatment is especially important since veterans living in such areas are less likely to be diagnosed and treated for post-traumatic stress disorder. For those of us whose daily existence is not lived in harm's way, it is difficult to imagine the horrific images that American servicemen and women deployed in war zones see on a daily basis.

The courageous men and women of the Armed Forces brave IEDs, attacks, injury, and horrific violence to protect the safety and security of the United States, and we must, in turn, care for them when they return home. We must make this a priority and increase the number of medical facilities specializing in PTSD located in underserved urban areas.

These soldiers can be certain that Members of Congress will ensure that they receive the necessary treatment to guarantee that their adjustment back into society is a successful one. The Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1404 would have helped to ensure that no soldier is left behind.

Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1508 directs the Secretary of Defense to carry out a study and report to Congress on service-related injuries and medical conditions that occur post-enlistment and the determination of disability ratings based on age, race, gender, ethnicity, type of injury, and other functions as relates to the 50 percent or higher disability rating requirement for Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) for military personnel or veterans, who are eligible for both VA disability payments and military retirement pay.

Since its inception on January 1, 2004, the Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) has made it possible for military retirees to receive both military retired pay and Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation.

Under the CRDP eligibility rules, however, a military retiree may be entitled to CRDP only if they are a regular retiree with a VA disability rating of 50 percent or greater, among other considerations.

This rating requirement may be significantly impacted by the discretionary powers of VA disability examiners who often make rating decisions largely based on judgment calls.

This may have negative consequences for certain groups of people who are mis-conceived to have higher tolerance for pain compared to other races or groups.

The result is certain groups disproportionately receiving higher disability ratings for low tolerance for pain as compared with others.

The Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1508 would have ensured that the Secretary of Defense carries out a study to assess bias and discrimination in the VA disability rating system for compensation and pay (VA claim) examinations and to determine whether the judgement component of these examinations, often at the discretion of the examiners, is

sometimes biased against certain races who are considered to have higher tolerance for pain.

Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1511 directs the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of Education and professionals in the field of psychology with expertise in pediatric and adolescent mental health, to conduct an assessment of evidence-based strategies that may be used to reduce the security threat posed by active shooter incidents at public elementary schools and secondary schools located on the grounds of federal military installations without being apparent to students as law enforcement or security measures.

This amendment further directs that not later than 180 days after NDAA enactment, the Secretary shall submit to Congressional defense committees a report on this assessment.

I offered this amendment because, while I applaud the Pentagon's Inspector General's efforts at commencing a comprehensive research project on how various law enforcement agencies of our military branches have responded to active shooter incidents and violence in the workplace on military installations over the years, I still believe that more needs to be done to protect our kids in the classroom on every military base.

The Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1511 would have prioritized the students' mental, emotional, and psychological health and development in the planning and implementation of active shooter trainings and the disruption and trauma it can impose on children in and of itself.

Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1513 requires the Secretary of Defense to audit current practices regarding administration of sexual harassment claims and submit a report no later than 180 days after passage detailing efforts to prevent sexual harassment and protect service-members, and compiling data and research on sexual harassment prevalence in the military, cases reported, legal proceedings, and convictions.

In 2021, sexual assaults surged in the military, with 8,886 cases reported, from 7,816 in 2020.

A 2022 survey estimated that 35,875 active-duty service members experienced “unwanted sexual contact” in 2021. These are very concerning numbers and major action is needed.

Currently, the Department of Defense is required to provide an annual report on sexual assault in the military, including data and planned actions for improvement.

While we deeply appreciate the ongoing cooperation and determination to address sexual harassment concerns, we are long overdue for a thorough audit of current practices regarding the handling of sexual harassment claims.

To ensure accountability and effectiveness, it is important that the sexual assault claims process is thoroughly evaluated.

The knowledge gained through the Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1513 would help equip the creation of meaningful policy and standards for accountability against sexual assault in the military and ensure that we continue to effectively protect the men and women that serve this country.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION
OF H.R. 2670, NATIONAL DEFENSE
AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL
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If voted on favorably, this report will not only inform us of our current capacity to provide housing but will also better equip Congress to respond to disasters and support survivors in the future.

In addition to this amendment, I offered the below listed amendments.

The Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1051 directed the Secretary of Defense to submit a report on the naming practices recognizing African American service members in the Department of Defense.

Throughout the history of our Nation, from the Battle of Lexington through the Battle of Fallujah to Afghanistan and Iraq, Black soldiers have served honorably and answered the call to duty during our nation's time of maximum danger.

For over 200 years, African Americans have participated in every conflict that confronted this Nation.

Besides fighting the common enemies of this country with unmatched bravery and valor, Black soldiers also had to confront individual and institutional racism of their countrymen.

African American servicemembers have served with great valor and distinction in all branches of our nation's armed forces.

Since the revolutionary war, Black Americans have faithfully defended this Nation and built a legacy of courage, commitment, and professionalism.

Like any other group of Americans, Black soldiers have served the armed forces with great honor, distinction, and generational inspiration.

The Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1051 would have ensured that the legacies of Black American servicemembers are duly recognized and honored.

The Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1104 requires a report to be submitted to Congress within 240 days of NDAA enactment on the risks posed by debris in low Earth orbit and to make recommendations on remediation of risks and outline plans to reduce the incident of space debris.

Space debris encompasses both natural and artificial particles and this amendment would address the risk of man-made space debris. Man-made objects in Earth's orbit that may no longer serve a useful function can include nonfunctional spacecraft, abandoned launch vehicle stages, mission-related debris and fragmentation debris.

Space debris travels at speeds up to 17,500 miles per hour—fast enough for a small piece of man-made debris to damage a satellite or a spacecraft.

There are more than 20,000 pieces of debris larger than a softball orbiting the Earth. There are 500,000 pieces of debris the size of a marble or larger tracked by NASA, and there are many millions of pieces of debris that are so small they can't be tracked.

This amendment seeks a report on risks posed by man-made space debris, solutions for reducing risks, and strategies for reducing the incidence of more man-made space debris being introduced into space.

Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1104 would have addressed these challenges.

Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1402 requires the Secretary of Defense to ensure that military academy graduates undergo screening for speech disorders and be provided with their results.

Many officer positions and occupation specialists require successful performance on the

speech test, so it is essential that military academy students are aware of their status as they shape their career path.

Under this amendment, military academy students would have the option of undergoing speech therapy to reduce speech disorders or impediments.

Thus, military academy students who do not perform successfully on the speech test have the opportunity to improve their performance and potentially go on to pursue the officer and specialist positions they seek.

Approximately 5–10 percent of all children stutter as they develop language skills. Boys are 2 to 3 times more likely to stutter than girls. And approximately 75 percent of children recover from stuttering, but the remaining 25 percent will experience life-long effects of stuttering.

I offered this amendment to help entrants into military academies find the right career fit for their military service after graduation.

I learned about the issue of stuttering and its implications for a successful military career through the experiences of a Legislative Fellow who once served in my D.C. office.

He was a 2016 graduate from the United States Naval Academy with a degree in Operations Research and a veteran naval officer who was separated from the Navy in April 2019 because his speech fluency testing results did not meet the Naval Aviation community standards, and so he was disqualified from serving as an aviator.

At that critical juncture he was not informed about what careers he could qualify to fill that would not be impacted by the determination regarding his speech.

This Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1402 would have represented an important investment in military academy students, improving transparency and providing avenues for personal improvement, ensuring quality candidates for vital military leadership positions.

Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1405 removes bill language about Critical Race Theory, thereby rejecting any efforts to inject politics into the armed services.

In this way, my amendment affirms the importance of July 26, 1948, the date that President Harry Truman signed Executive Order 9981, creating the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services.

This executive order desegregated the military and declared that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin.

This was a major step forward and was the result of dedicated advocacy efforts from the NAACP and ACLU, as well as President Truman's own commitment to the issue.

The importance of this Executive Order and the change it brought about cannot be overstated. The diversity of the military and the equality of opportunity found there is one of the major strengths of the armed services.

It is crucial that the armed services continue their commitment to live out the promises of equality and opportunity enshrined in Executive Order 9981.

The current provisions of the NDAA which prohibit the use of federal funds for critical race theory are largely political in nature and represent a step away from the promises President Truman made of equality and opportunity in the military. The Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1405 would have ensured that these