

*As defined in Section 47(6) of the Arms Export Control Act.

POLICY JUSTIFICATION

Sweden—Multifunctional Information Distribution System Joint Tactical Radio Systems

The Government of Sweden has requested to buy one hundred twenty (120) AN/USQ-190 Multifunctional Information Distribution System Joint Tactical Radio Systems (MIDS JTRS). The following non-Major Defense Equipment (MDE) items will also be included: communications equipment; support equipment; engineering and technical support and assistance; non-warranty repair and return; training; and other related elements of logistics and program support. The estimated total cost is \$31.5 million.

This proposed sale will support the foreign policy goals and national security objectives of the United States by improving the security of a NATO Ally that is a force for political stability and economic progress in Europe.

The proposed sale will improve Sweden's capability to meet current and future threats by modernizing its existing Link 16 capability to interoperate with U.S. forces and to exchange secure, jam-resistant tactical data via Link 16. Sweden will use the enhanced capability as a deterrent to regional threats and strengthen its homeland defense. Sweden will have no difficulty absorbing this equipment into its armed forces.

The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

The principal contractor is Data Link Solutions, located in Cedar Rapids, IA. There are no known offset agreements proposed in connection with this potential sale.

Implementation of this proposed sale will not require the assignment of any additional U.S. Government or contractor representatives to Sweden; however, U.S. Government Engineering and Technical Services may be required on an interim basis for training and technical assistance.

There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 24-89

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act

Annex Item No. vii

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology:

1. The AN/USQ-190 Multifunctional Information Distribution System Joint Tactical Radio Systems (MIDS JTRS) builds on MIDS-Low Volume Terminal (LVT)'s capabilities with the addition of Concurrent Multi-Netting (CMN) and Concurrent Contention Receive (CCR) functions. CMN and CCR dramatically expand the number of platforms and network-enabled systems that can be reliably included in a Link 16 network. These enhancements allow a single MIDS JTRS terminal to simultaneously receive messages on up to four nets (compared with only a single net in terminals without CMN and CCR) within a single Link 16 time slot, allowing a user to "hear" messages from up to three additional sources at once.

2. The highest level of classification of defense articles, components, and services included in this potential sale is SECRET.

3. If a technologically advanced adversary were to obtain knowledge of the specific hardware and software elements, the information could be used to develop countermeasures that might reduce weapon system effectiveness or be used in the development of a system with similar or advanced capabilities.

4. A determination has been made that Sweden can provide substantially the same

degree of protection for the sensitive technology being released as the U.S. Government. This sale is necessary in furtherance of the U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives outlined in the Policy Justification.

5. All defense articles and services listed in this transmittal have been authorized for release and export to the Government of Sweden.

SUPPORTING HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, on March 6, 2021, almost a year to the day after communities across America—and Alaska—shut down in an attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19, this body was voting on the third COVID relief bill, the American Rescue Plan.

Unfortunately, this was a wholly partisan exercise. Rather than advancing a bipartisan consensus effort, one side unilaterally pushed forward the largest spending package Congress had ever advanced, which I was not able to support. However, in the midst of that bogged down, partisan exercise, there was a bright spot of cross-aisle collaboration that brought together Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. In fact, it was one of only three amendments that passed with unanimous support during a contentious process where over 40 votes were taken.

I am speaking of my amendment with Senators MANCHIN, PORTMAN, SINEMA, COLLINS, and SULLIVAN to designate \$800 million of the K12 education funds in the bill to be used for identifying, supporting, and educating children and youth experiencing homelessness.

I offered this amendment because the first two COVID relief packages did not include any dedicated funding to support this vulnerable population, who were arguably the most negatively impacted by school closures.

At that time, 2,578 Alaskan children and youth were identified as experiencing homelessness. That number grew to 3,554 in the next school year. Unfortunately, we are on pace to break records this school year.

Homelessness has far-reaching impacts on young people, affecting both their personal development and education. Living without a stable home means increased stress, insecurity, and trauma, leading to mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.

The tolls of their living situation also affects their physical health, increasing the risk of illness, obesity, diabetes, and hunger. Many youth struggle with regular sleep without a consistent place to rest their head. And many turn to substance abuse to cope with hardships.

For youth in school, homelessness often results in frequent school absences, difficulty concentrating, and lower academic achievement, as the instability of their living conditions makes it hard to focus on learning. The

likelihood of dropping out of school rises dramatically, and so does the risk of being involved in the juvenile justice system.

Homeless youth may lack access to essential resources like school supplies, quiet study spaces, and nutritious meals, further widening the achievement gap.

Now I am probably not breaking any news to those of us in Congress, who have heard too many stories of young people enduring these incredibly trying conditions.

But I am here today to share some incredible news on this front from the bipartisan work done on this floor to help our youths in crisis.

In my home State of Alaska, we received \$2.35 million in these funds, more than eight times its usual allocation.

To see the impact that these funds have had makes my heart sing. What was really incredible was seeing how each district used these funds creatively to meet the unique and specific needs of the kids they serve. By providing districts flexibility in their spending, schools were able to provide everything from school supplies to cell phones to clothing and food.

In the Kenai Peninsula School District, they used funds to help a student access mental health services. This particular student had experienced homelessness and housing instability for the majority of their time in public education. After falling off the radar of the school, the student became an unaccompanied homeless youth due to parental substance use disorder and incarceration.

These homeless youth funds were a lifeline in providing critical mental health services to support this student, giving them tools for coping, and helped place them on a path to sustained stability at a time when they were experiencing incredible uncertainty and didn't have someone in their life to help guide them.

In Anchorage, the school district used these funds to provide Wi-Fi hot spots, since the subsidized broadband internet was no longer available.

These funds enabled the purchase of 15 Wi-Fi hot spots for families last school year and 10 more for this year. You can imagine that for families and youth who are moving from place to place—motels, cars, couches—access to reliable internet to complete homework and communicate with teachers is a particular challenge. No other district program is able to support homeless students this way. ASD's Migrant Education, Indigenous Education, and English Language Learners departments see this as a big need but one they cannot address.

In addition to hotspots, Anchorage School District's program was able to provide car repairs. Now, that might seem like a strange way to help those experiencing homelessness, but districts discovered that car repairs made more economic sense than providing

cab services for young people trying to attend classes. By providing \$200 on car repair costs, the district ultimately saved money on transportation, and families had more reliable car services.

Both districts also used funding to bring on additional staff designated to work with homeless students. The Child in Transition Program in the Anchorage School District was able to hire two full-time staff for remote sites and five part-time staff in high schools to support students on campus and connect them to services. These staffers are connecting students and families with identification efforts, checking in on attendance and grades, monitoring and supporting academic progress, and facilitating referrals with community partners.

In fact, one of these staffers was able to build rapport with a student experiencing homelessness who was interested in applying for a job, but didn't know how to start the process. By having a dedicated staff member, who they knew and trusted, the support and resources were there for this student to apply for the position and prepare for their interview. Today, that young person is employed.

These real-life examples highlight what this funding is actually doing on the ground and the incredible, real world benefits it has in the lives of youth and families experiencing homelessness.

We know that the No. 1 risk factor for adult homelessness is the lack of a high school education or equivalent.

The challenges and hardships that youth experiencing homelessness face can set them on the wrong path, severely limiting future opportunities for employment and healthy lifestyles.

These funds are still directly supporting students so they can attend school and have the resources to successfully complete their education.

This funding is helping young people get out of the homelessness cycle permanently.

I am proud to stand here with my colleagues to share the impact of this American Rescue Plan provision.

I was disappointed that we were not able to get a clean 1-year extension done so that we can continue to hear good stories of the work being done in our communities to identify and support homeless youth.

There were a number of reasons that States and local education agencies were not able to fully spend down their funds—from local education agencies not even being aware of the additional flexible funds, to delayed guidelines from the Department of Education on allowable uses.

So without an extension, some States will be returning funds. And make no mistake: These are funds that are still critically needed in our communities. The youth experiencing homelessness in our States still need our support, and we expect to see continued increases in homeless youth.

To be clear, there is more work to be done with homelessness on the rise. I

urge my colleagues to work with us to address these issues.

CONSTITUTION WEEK

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I rise in recognition of Constitution Week, recognized from September 17 through September 23.

Since 1956, Congress has recognized an annual Constitution Week in recognition of the signing of the U.S. Constitution in Philadelphia on September 17, 1787. We also recognize Constitution Day and Citizenship Day on September 17, providing an opportunity for us to reflect upon and to learn about our Nation's founding document.

This annual recognition is of critical importance. Our Constitution informs our system of governance, creates individual rights and liberties, and expresses our collective values. Throughout my time in office, I have prioritized working to improve the quality of U.S. history and civics education throughout our Nation. Educating current and future generations of Americans about our Constitution is a critical piece of this.

While the flaws and omissions inherent in the original Constitution are widely recognized, one of its most important features is that it was designed to remain adaptable to future generations of Americans. Virginia delegate Edmund Randolph, one of the drafters, stated that the intention was to "insert essential principles only, lest the operations of government should be clogged by rendering those provisions permanent and unalterable, which ought to be accommodated to times and events."

Of course, article V of our Constitution also lays out an explicit amendment process. Amendments can be made to our Constitution when proposed by a two-thirds vote of both the House and Senate and ratified by three-fourths of the State legislatures, which equates to 38 States.

Today, we are in the unprecedented situation in which a constitutional amendment ratified by the required 38 States has not been formally recognized as a part of our Constitution. In 2020, Virginia became the 38th and final required State to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment, which was proposed and sent to the States after passage by broad bipartisan majorities in 1972.

The ERA would constitutionally protect the equality of rights under the law, regardless of sex. The main clause of the amendment simply states, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."

Despite what many Americans believe, the only right explicitly guaranteed regardless of sex in the U.S. Constitution is the 19th Amendment right to vote. The Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment has been invoked successfully in sex discrimination cases, but the outcomes of these chal-

lenges have been inconsistent. The current Supreme Court's approach to the Constitution highlights the need for the ERA, given the apparent belief by some Justices that the Equal Protection Clause should be frozen in time in 1868, casting in doubt those precedents currently holding that the Equal Protection Clause applies to sex discrimination.

Our lack of an explicit provision places us out of line with the rest of the world. Eighty-five percent of countries have an explicit prohibition against governmental discrimination on the basis of sex.

The United States is the only industrialized democracy that does not include an explicit provision in its Constitution, a marker that I take seriously as the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. On August 6 of 2024, the American Bar Association, which is the leading legal association in our Nation, voted overwhelmingly to recognize the ERA as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Resolution 601 urges government on all levels to implement the ERA now.

This important affirmation by our Nation's leading association of lawyers is in line with the position taken by many members of this body. In a vote on April 27, 2024, a bipartisan majority of U.S. Senators voted to affirm the validity of the Equal Rights Amendment as our 28th Amendment to the Constitution and to explicitly remove the deadline that Congress included in the preamble of the resolution proposing the ERA to the States.

In both 2020 and 2021, the House of Representatives passed a similar joint resolution to explicitly remove this arbitrary deadline for adoption of this critical constitutional amendment.

It is important that we pass this S.J. Res. 4, which I have been pleased to lead on a bipartisan basis with Senator LISA MURKOWSKI of Alaska, to remove any ambiguity and to make it clear beyond a doubt that the ERA is a valid part of our Constitution. The passage of this resolution is long overdue. However, the fact remains that the Equal Rights Amendment has already fulfilled all of the requirements laid out in article V and should be recognized—today—as our 28th Amendment.

Women still face serious challenges "on account of sex," and our existing legal framework does not always provide a sufficient remedy.

As the 28th Amendment, the ERA would serve as a new tool—for Congress, for Federal Agencies, and the courts—to advance equality in the fields of workforce and pay, pregnancy discrimination, sexual harassment and violence, reproductive autonomy, and protections for LGBTQ+ individuals.

For example, we recently recognized 30 years since the passage of the Violence Against Women Act, which President Biden described as his "proudest legislative achievement." Despite all of the successful progress through VAWA,