



May 10, 2024

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith,

As the United States faces global threats not seen in decades, Congress has a fundamental responsibility to ensure the security of all Americans. For over 60 years, Congress has guided US national security priorities through the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The FY24 NDAA supported our servicemembers and their families, reaffirmed our commitment to allies and partners, invested in American innovation and energy security, and strengthened the defense industrial base and our supply chains. We thank you for your continued leadership in crafting bipartisan, bicameral legislation each year that supports our national defense. To ensure the US remains equipped to respond to threats at home and abroad, the FY25 NDAA must invest in a broad array of military, diplomatic, foreign aid, intelligence, and economic tools to protect American lives and advance American values.

The New Democrat Coalition (NDC) has developed several NDAA priorities to promote the safety and prosperity of Americans and enhance the security of our allies and partners. The Coalition's agenda mirrors the changing global landscape, underscored by a steadfast dedication to safeguarding democracy and freedom globally.

It is especially heartening that the base text of the FY25 NDAA will be the Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement Act which is based off of the Armed Services Committee's bipartisan Quality of Life Panel. This shows that the recommendation of the panel will be of utmost priority to the Committee and the Congress. Many members of the NDC were proud to serve and participate on the panel including Reps. Marilyn Strickland, Chrissy Houlahan, Veronica Escobar, Sara Jacobs, and Don Davis along with Rep. Salud Carbajal testifying before the Panel.

As you work to develop and advance the FY25 NDAA, we respectfully request that you work with us to include NDC priorities in the NDAA. These include:

Supporting servicemembers and their families

Servicemembers and their families are at the heart of our national security, and it's essential that we give them the resources, services, and support they need and deserve. However, an insufficient supply of safe and affordable housing, lack of quality childcare programs, high military spouse unemployment, and limited access to timely mental and physical healthcare services are a few of the key challenges servicemembers and their families face. Furthermore, servicemembers face a risk of military sexual trauma (MST), which impacts both the health of servicemembers and unit effectiveness. The alarming 25% increase in military sexual assaults between 2018 and 2021¹ underscores the need for additional actions to prevent sexual violence and protect servicemembers. These challenges have a direct bearing on recruiting, readiness, and retention and we must advance policies that improve the lives and livelihoods of servicemembers and their families. Therefore, we urge the Committee to:

- Advance policies that improve housing safety and affordability, such as upgrading unaccompanied housing, expanding wireless internet access, and improving transparency of Facilities, Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization (FSRM) funds.
- Expand the accessibility of childcare services, including funding childcare fee assistance programs and providing competitive pay and benefits for childcare personnel.
- Increase timely access to quality mental and physical healthcare through a variety of policy measures, including streamlining access to specialty providers, and evaluating health care provider hiring and retention strategies.
- Enable military spouses to achieve their career goals by improving and expanding programs that provide military spouses with employment support.
- Continue to advance policies to address PFAS contamination and the risk forever chemicals pose to our servicemembers, their families, and surrounding communities.
- Strengthen career development and mentorship programs that aid servicemember's transition to the civilian workforce.
- Evaluate and enhance programs to prevent and respond to sexual violence in the Armed Forces.

Enhancing the defense industrial base

To ensure the U.S. can maintain military readiness and achieve its national security objectives, we must have a resilient defense industrial base. The events of recent years have exposed serious vulnerabilities in our industrial ecosystem, including insufficient domestic manufacturing capacity, long manufacturing lead times, inadequate number of skilled workers, and overreliance on single or adversarial foreign sources for key materials and production capacity. These

¹ ['2021 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Military Members: Reports,' Office of People Analytics U.S. Department of Defense \(2021\)](#)

vulnerabilities impact our military readiness today, from aircraft being unable to meet mission capability goals due to supply challenges² to depleted munitions stockpiles that will take years to replenish. We are pleased that the Department of Defense (DoD) is taking steps to strengthen the defense industrial base with its first National Defense Industrial Strategy (NDIS), but more must be done to maintain our economic and national security. To help build resilient supply chains and maximize production capabilities, we urge the Committee to:

- Replenish weapons and munitions inventories and promote strategies that improve future production, acquisitions, and replenishment policies.
- Strengthen programs that expand a diverse and skilled workforce.
- Support initiatives that bolster supply chains for critical materials.
- Advance policies that reduce barriers to entry and attract new entrants into the ecosystem.

Investing in military modernization and innovation

U.S. global leadership is made possible by its dynamic science and technology innovation ecosystem. However, the U.S. risks losing its military advantage over rapidly advancing adversaries if we do not modernize tactical capabilities and innovate in key technology areas. While the U.S. private sector continues to out-innovate the world in technologies such as artificial intelligence and commercial space, the DOD faces well-known challenges in transitioning emerging and commercial technologies into warfighting capabilities. Technology evolves quicker than the government's decision-making processes, limiting the military's ability to swiftly move technologies from concept to adoption. The realignment of the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) in 2023 is a welcome development that will help the DoD leverage impactful technologies at scale. While the DIU is an important part of strengthening defense innovation, we recognize more progress is needed to maintain our technological edge. As such, we urge the Committee to:

- Fund research, development, and deployment of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, across the innovation pipeline.
- Advance initiatives that facilitate collaboration with private sector companies and streamline procurement efforts.
- Promote the development of innovative energy technologies to increase installation resiliency, energy efficiency, and energy storage.
- Maintain adequate oversight over advanced technologies such as autonomous weapons and artificial intelligence to ensure ethical and responsible use.

Additionally, freedom and democracy are at risk around the world, and the United States must demonstrate strong global leadership to protect our national security and that of our allies, including Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan. Our allies and adversaries alike are watching how we

² [‘Weapon System Sustainment: Aircraft Mission Capable Goals Were Generally Not Met and Sustainment Costs Varied by Aircraft.’ GAO \(Nov. 2022\)](#)

respond to these security threats, and how we must also prioritize humanitarian assistance to the citizens in Gaza and the West Bank. If we abdicate our responsibility to stand by our allies, the consequences for America's national security will be significant. We must send a message to the world that the U.S. upholds its commitment to freedom, democracy, and human rights.

As the FY25 NDAA is written, we stand ready to work with our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to deliver a strong bill that ensures the United States retains its role as a global leader in the 21st century.

Sincerely,



Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress



Ed Case
Member of Congress



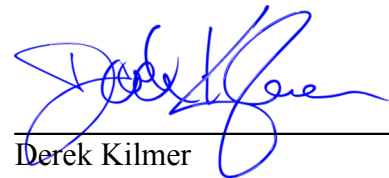
Jason Crow
Member of Congress



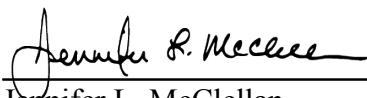
Jared Moskowitz
Member of Congress



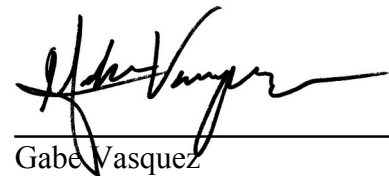
Ann McLane Kuster
Chair
New Democrat Coalition



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



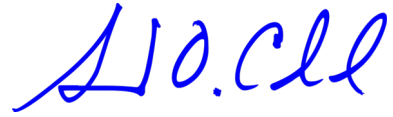
Jennifer L. McClellan
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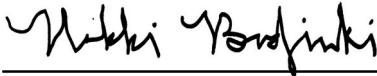
Gabe Vasquez
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Donald Norcross
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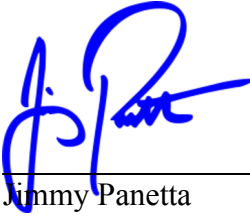
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Ami Bera, M.D.
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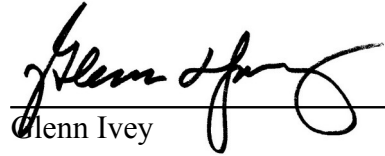
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Terri A. Sewell
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Glenn Ivey
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Bradley Scott Schneider
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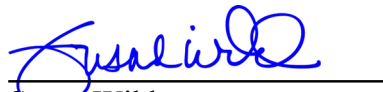
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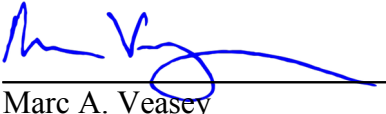
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Lizzie Fletcher
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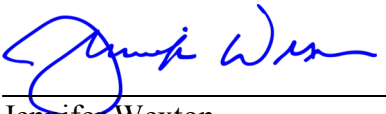
Joseph D. Morelle
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Madeleine Dean
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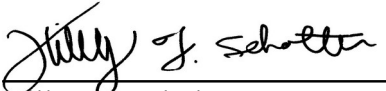
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