



December 8, 2021

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman, Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Messrs. Chairmen and Ranking Members:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of uniformed services and veterans' associations representing more than 5.5 million currently serving, retired, former service members, survivors, and their families, thank you and the Committees for your collective work in producing the FY22 National Defense Authorization Act. Your efforts support our Uniformed Services, protect the interests of service members and their families, and enhance our nation's security.

We applaud the bipartisan, bicameral work accomplished by lawmakers and staff this year – in partnership with TMC – on important legislation to ensure appropriate pay and benefits. We hope Congress will complete work on both the NDAA and appropriations bills by the end of the first Session, so the Department of Defense can continue its work without restrictions on new starts, expired provisions, and other obstacles that occur when these vital bills are put on hold.

We also thank both the House and Senate for reinforcing the fundamental comparability principle with a 2.7 percent raise for FY22. We will continue to address restoration of the 2.6 percent in accumulated losses from pay raises that lagged behind the Employment Cost Index between 2014 and 2016 in our recommendations for future budgets. Moreover, we respectfully offer the following support and recommendations for the NDAA Conference:

Incentive Pay Parity (H.R.4350/ S.2792 Sec. 602) – TMC appreciates the House and Senate including parity of Incentive Pay benefits for National Guard and Reserve members who meet the same standards as Active Duty. It is also gratifying that several Reserve Component Chiefs have testified on the positive impact this benefit will have in retaining technicians and other RC service members. The individuals who meet this criteria serve in hardship specialties that demand training beyond other specialties and retaining them will both recognize their efforts and help the services retain their leadership and experience.

Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (H.R.4350 Sec. 6414) – TMC supports a commonsense approach to binding arbitration. We also encourage the House and Senate to extend this authority to USERRA. This additional authority will help future employment compliance and fulfill the intent of USERRA, to keep National Guard and Reserve members employed. We stand by to continue working this issue in the second Session.

Skillbridge program (H.R.4350 Sec. 553) – TMC requests the committee change eligibility for the program from 180-day orders to 179-day orders. The National Guard and Reserve continue to lose vital benefits because DoD deliberately cuts-off orders one day prior to eligibility. In this case, Reserve

Component service members have problems staying employed which is evident in the number of cases the Department of Labor and ESGR work on each year with companies not meeting USERRA laws. Skillbridge is a program that can provide valuable services.

Medical Billet Cuts (H.R.4350 Sec. 721) – TMC is concerned about the impact on beneficiary access to care if the Services move forward with proposed military medical billet cuts. We support the House provision which would pause military medical billet reductions for one year and would require a report to Congress on the impact of any cuts and plans to mitigate those effects.

Autism Care (H.R.4350 Sec. 738) – TMC supports an independent analysis of the Autism Care Demonstration.

Obstetrical Care (S.2792 Sec. 701) – TMC supports adding coverage of preconception and prenatal carrier screening, to address a gap in TRICARE policy and ensure that military families can access widely available screening tests.

Mental Health (H.R.4350 Sec. 734 and 736) – TMC supports authorizing pilot programs on mental health appointment scheduling (Sec. 734) and surveying access to mental health care (736).

Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevention (S.2792 Secs. 531-538, and H.R.4350 Secs. 532-538, 539A, 539C, 539F, 541) – TMC supports inclusion of Senate and House provisions addressing sexual assault and harassment prevention and disposition.

Basic Needs Allowance (H.R. 4350/S. 2792 Sec. 601) – TMC supports the House version of Military Family Basic Needs Allowance, which excludes the Basic Allowance for Housing as income. No military family should go hungry.

Child Care (H.R.4350 Sec. 626 and 2814) – TMC supports child care provisions that improve access to quality, affordable care, ensure safety of Child Development Centers (Sec. 2814), and expand the in-home child care fee assistance pilot program (Sec. 626).

Military Retirement Pay (S.2792 Sec. 606) – TMC supports prohibiting the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) from suspending military retired pay or a military retirement annuity until DFAS provides the beneficiary with 90-day notice to the retiree, annuitant, or their designated representative that explains the reason for the suspension. This provision also requires DFAS to provide a single annual eligibility procedure for retirees and annuitants.

Finally, TMC is disappointed neither the House nor Senate version of the FY22 NDAA addressed the important issue of concurrent receipt. Specifically, Senator Jon Tester's (MT) and Rep. Gus Bilirakis' (FL) amendments with the provisions of the "Major Richard Star Act" (S. 344/H.R. 1282) that expand concurrent receipt to include Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) beneficiaries who are medically retired, with less than 20 years of service. It is an injustice to cut service members retirement benefits because some medically retired members receive disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Civilians do not lose their Social Security if they receive disability compensation or settlements from their employers. We will continue to work this issue in the 2nd Session.

Sincerely,



President,

The Military Coalition

See attached list of organizations:

cc: Members of House and Senate Armed Services Committees

The Military Coalition:

Air Force Sergeants Association

AMSUS, the Society of Federal Health Professionals

AMVETS

Army Aviation Association of America

Chief Warrant & Warrant Officers Association, USCG

Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.

Fleet Reserve Association

Gold Star Wives

Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America

Marine Corps League

Marine Corps Reserve Association

Military Officers Association of America

Military Order of the Purple Heart

National Military Family Association

Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

Non-Commissioned Officers Association

Reserve Organization of America

Service Women's Action Network

The Independence Fund

The Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America

TREA: The Enlisted Association

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

United States Army Warrant Officers Association

United States Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

VetsFirst

Vietnam Veterans of America

Wounded Warrior Project