



August ##, 2023

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

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

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
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 FY24 National Defense Authorization Act. Your efforts support our Uniformed Services, protect the interests of service members, their families and survivors, 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 this fiscal year, 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 5.2 percent pay raise for FY24. Considering recent inflationary trends, we also encourage consideration of restoring the 2.6 percent in accumulated losses from pay raises, which lagged the Employment Cost Index between 2014 and 2016, in FY24 NDAA. Moreover, we respectfully offer the following support and recommendations for the NDAA Conference:

Oppose Partial TRICARE Fixes (House Section 707 and Senate Section 703) – TMC has long advocated for legislation to ensure TRICARE evolves with changing technologies, treatment protocols and commercial plan benchmarks. TMC appreciates efforts to address some of these parity issues in the FY24 NDAA, but strongly opposes excluding beneficiary segments, including Coast Guard/USPHS/NOAA and uniformed services retirees and their families, from TRICARE coverage updates. To ensure TRICARE coverage is comprehensive and up-to-date for all beneficiaries, Congress must find a solution to the direct spending impacts associated with funding health care for a sliver of the beneficiary population – without cutting TRICARE or reducing other military benefits and resources as an offset. Allowing TRICARE coverage to continue to lag benchmarks not only fails to support our nation's obligation to those who have earned the benefit, but it also raises the risk that service members, retirees, and their families – key influencers in the recruiting process – will be less likely to recommend military service to current and future generations.

Pharmacy Network Report (House Section 765) – TMC thanks both the House and Senate for including requirements to assess TRICARE pharmacy network cuts. We strongly urge the conferees to include in the FY24 NDAA a provision that directs a GAO report including the detailed requirements outlined in House Sec.

765 – this will provide a thorough and independent analysis of changes to TRICARE beneficiary prescription drug access from TPharm4 to TPharm5.

TRICARE dental plan for the Selected Reserve (House Section 701) – TMC thanks the House for including the Dental Care for Our Troops Act (H.R.4220/S.2046) in its version of the NDAA. This legislation, if enacted, would enhance the dental and financial readiness of all Selected Reserve members. However, there is no companion provision included in the Senate’s NDAA. We strongly urge the inclusion of the Dental Care for Our Troops Act in the final version of the FY24 NDAA.

Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) Expansion (House Section 1821) – TMC supports the House’s inclusion of report language, regarding ANC expansion, as an important step in the right direction on this important issue. In the interim, we continue to strongly advocate for passage of The Expanding America’s National Cemetery Act (H.R. 1413), currently cosponsored by 64 representatives.

Retain Skilled Veterans (House Section 1108) – TMC supports the House’s inclusion of language similar to The Retain Skilled Veterans Act (H.R. 939). This would improve competitive hiring pools for DoD civilian positions, by authorizing newly retired service members to apply for DoD civilian positions and removing the six-month cooling off period.

Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention (House Section 543/Senate Sections 572, 573, 575, and 576) – The Coalition supports the House’s inclusion of a study of the feasibility and advisability of moving Sexual Assault Victim Advocates outside the chain of command of the victim. TMC also supports the Senate’s efforts to increase the visibility of high rates of sexual assault and harassment in JROTC units, with measures including requirements for training cadets to identify, prevent, and report crimes against them; outside reviews and annual reports on allegations against instructors; and annual reports on attempts to increase the transparency of allegations to Congress.

Absorb BAH By 1 Percent (House Section 4401) – TMC supports restoring Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) to 100 percent through the BAH Restoration Act (H.R. 2537 and S. 1823) and appreciates the House’s work to make incremental progress through the NDAA, via absorption by 1 percent, bringing the BAH rate to 96 percent.

Eliminate BAH from the Basic Needs Allowance (BNA) Calculation (House Section 621) – The Coalition appreciates progress on BNA but recognizes the need to expand eligibility to support low-income service members and their families, struggling with food insecurity. Excluding BAH from the BNA calculation will increase eligible populations, improving overall quality of life for service members and their families.

Family Separation Allowance (FSA) (House Section 628) – Each pay plays an important role in service member compensation and must be frequently revisited. The House’s increase of FSA to \$400 per month ensures its adequacy for today’s family needs and requires it to be revisited on a regular basis.

Discounted Child Care for DoD Child Care Employees (House Section 643) – The nationwide shortage of child care providers continues to negatively impact military families. TMC supports implementing a tiered fee structure, starting with no fee for the first child of DoD child care employees.

Extension of period of eligibility for health benefits under TRICARE Reserve Select for survivors of a member of the Selected Reserve (House Section 702 / Senate Section 701) – TMC thanks the House and Senate for including the Sergeant First Class Michael Clark TRICARE Reserve Parity Act (H.R.2935/S.1755) in their respective versions of the NDAA. This legislation, if enacted, would provide survivors of Reserve and National Guard service with continued TRICARE coverage for the same length of time as is currently provided to survivors of Active Component service.

Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 1282/S. 344) – We are disappointed that provisions of this important legislation were not included in either the House or Senate versions of FY24 NDAA. However, we are grateful for the overwhelming, bipartisan number of cosponsors in both houses of Congress (325 in the House, and 71 in the Senate) who agree that reducing retired pay, because a medically retired combat veteran receives

a VA disability check, is an injustice. We remain committed to getting this signed into law as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack DuTil". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

President,
The Military Coalition
cc: Members of House and Senate Armed Services Committees

The Military Coalition: