

House Armed Service Committee
FY14 NDAA Member Day Hearing
Testimony of Congresswoman Chellie Pingree (ME-01)
May 8, 2013

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith: Thank you for this opportunity to testify today on the Fiscal Year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act.

As a former Member of the Armed Services Committee, I want to thank the Committee for providing this opportunity to weigh in on the upcoming defense bill. Having spent my first four years in Congress on this Committee, I know the work that goes into crafting this legislation and I thank you and the staff in advance for your hard work and dedication to America's service members.

My Congressional District in Maine has a strong and proud tradition of support for America's Armed Forces. More than 20 percent of the population is veterans and service members. We have a very active shipbuilding base at Bath Iron Works and we continue to provide Naval support through the work done at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine. In fact, as you may know, Portsmouth was founded over 200 years ago and is the oldest continuously operating shipyard in the United States Navy.

I support the President's budget request for Navy Shipbuilding and Construction.

In particular, I was pleased to see the funding levels for the Zumwalt Destroyer (the DDG-1000s) and the Arleigh Burke Destroyers (the DDG-51). Also, I support the multiyear advanced procurement in the DDG-51 account. I urge the Committee to at least provide the President's budget request in these areas.

Additionally, I am very supportive of the effort to contract additional Arleigh Burke-class destroyers this summer, with work to be completed over the next five years. This would provide significant and meaningful jobs in Maine and many others.

I want to urge the Committee to support the rebuilding of the USS Miami nuclear submarine that is currently being done at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. Currently, this project has been supported by the Navy and I am eager to ensure that Congress provide the Navy with the resources to make sure the repair of the Miami is completed.

Some of the best shipbuilders in the world live and work in Maine. Both BIW and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard have well-earned reputations for their efficiency, on-time delivery and world-class quality. The public and private investment in both of these yards has been considerable, and it shows. It is vitally important for the Navy to keep these yards fully operational and keep the highly skilled and experienced workers on the job. If we were to lose the industrial capacity at Bath and Kittery, it would be very hard to ever get it back.

Another issue of concern is the economic redevelopment of closed military installations, like the Brunswick Naval Air Station, which was selected for closure in the 2005 BRAC round, before I came to Congress. Congress enacted a number of different incentives to help these bases recover economic vitality. One incentive is the inclusion of a BRAC'd base in the list

of areas eligible for assistance under the SBA's HUBZone program, which provides improved federal contracting opportunities. However, in order to obtain these preferences, 35% of a business' employees must live within the HUBZone itself.

For many BRAC'd bases, this presents an obvious problem because there isn't necessarily sufficient housing at closed bases for new employees to reside in and as a result, the HUBZone designation for BRAC'd bases is very difficult to use. Modifying the residency requirement for BRAC'd installations to the immediate surrounding communities is a common sense solution to this technical problem.

Although the loss of the Brunswick Naval Air Station has had a significant impact on the local economy, the community has done a tremendous job taking what the Navy has left behind and transforming it into a *civilian* economic engine for the region. But there is a lot of work still to do, and this simple and common sense reform to the way HUBZones are designated will help develop businesses and create the good-paying jobs that will grow the economy in the area.

Lastly, I want to call attention to the issue of Military Sexual Assault. Just this week we heard of yet another horrific incident of sexual assault that reportedly occurred in the Air Force. We all know the lasting consequences of sexual assault and I'd like to talk about one of those consequences very briefly.

Many victims of military sexual assault need and want to seek mental health counseling, but for many years, service members who sought counseling had that used against them when they applied to renew or get an initial security clearance.

I was pleased that on April 5th the Director of National Intelligence issued Interim Guidance for victims of military sexual assault who seek to obtain or renew a security clearance. Question 21 of the Security Form 86 (SF86) *formerly asked* if you have consulted a health care professional regarding an emotional or mental health condition in the last seven years. In the past, many victims of military sexual assault refrained from seeking counseling because they feared it would prevent them from obtaining a security clearance. Under the Interim Guidance, victims of military sexual assault who received counseling strictly related to the assault are now directed to answer No to Q21.

I request that the Committee support language that directs the service departments to include information about this new guidance at the earliest stages possible, so sexual assault survivors can be comforted that we want them to seek mental health counseling and it won't be used against them as they continue their military careers.

Thank you Chairman McKeon and Ranking Member Smith for the opportunity to speak today on these critical issues.