

Testimony Before the House Armed Services Committee
Congressman Bruce Poliquin
March 1, 2016

Good Morning, Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith and Members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today about the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017. First and foremost, I would like to thank you for the important work you do.

I am here today to discuss three topics that are very important to me and ask for your support for each of them.

1. First, the Berry Amendment requires the Department of Defense to use domestically made products when available. Due to a decline in domestic athletic footwear manufacturing several years ago, the Pentagon stopped issuing Berry compliant athletic shoes to enlisted members of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps upon their initial entry into the armed forces.

But in recent years, New Balance—which employs 900 hardworking Mainers and 3,000 workers across the United States— has risen to the challenge and invested heavily in producing Berry compliant athletic footwear right here on American soil. Congresswoman Niki Tsongas (D-MA) and I have been working hard to ensure that the Department of Defense utilizes these American made shoes, which are arguably some of the best athletic shoes in the market today.

I urge you to include a proposal submitted by Congresswoman Tsongas that would ensure our men and women in uniform have access to the best American made athletic footwear available when they enter the United States Armed Forces. I respectfully request that you include this language in the committee mark.

2. Second, I am extremely pleased that last year's NDAA authorized an additional DDG-51 ship and also authorized the Navy to utilize Incremental Funding for procurement of that ship. The FY 2016 Omnibus provided a billion dollars of funding toward that authorized additional DDG-51, but left the balance of the ship's funding to be provided. These elite ships are the nation's frontline multi-mission surface combatants and are in heavy demand by Combatant Commanders due to their range of mission capabilities including expanded capability in Ballistic Missile Defense. Nearly 6,000 of the hardest working Americans build these ships in Bath, Maine. We must ensure that our Navy remains strong and these ships continue to be built.
3. Third, today I introduced the Fair Treatment for our National Guard and Reservists Act. This common sense piece of legislation restores the travel tax deduction for members of the National Guard and Reservists. These men and women leave their families once a month to spend weekends training. Under the current tax code, federal employees who travel more than 50 miles from their residence for non-reimbursable work related

travel can deduct those expenses from their taxes but our National Guard and Reserve Members must travel more than 100 miles to take advantage of that same tax deduction. This is unfair and wrong.

4. We cannot expect these men and women to sacrifice 52 weekends a year away from their friends and family so that they are prepared to deploy domestically and abroad and not provide them with the same tax deductions that we offer other federal employees. This bill requests that the Secretary of Defense conduct a study and report to Congress on the travel expenses that our National Guardsmen and women and Reservists spend annually. I urge the committee to include this study in the NDAA so that we can know how much we are asking these men and women to financially sacrifice for their weekend long training.

In closing, thank you for the important work you all do for our troops. Thank you for your time and consideration of these requests and I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.