

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

### Washington, DC 20515-1317

#### Testimony on National Defense Priorities

Thank you Chairman Thornberry and Ranking Member Smith for providing this opportunity to provide testimony essential to Illinois' 17th Congressional District.

Since the Civil War, the Rock Island Arsenal has been one of our nation's vital military assets and an integral part of the Quad-City region's economy. I am eager to work with you to ensure that the Rock Island Arsenal maintains the workload it needs to keep its workers' skills sharp and maintain readiness so that it can continue supporting our warfighters for years to come.

In addition to several critical commands, Rock Island is home to the Joint Manufacturing and Technology Center (JMTC). JMTC is the only remaining foundry within the Department of Army. In 2013, it was named a Center of Industrial and Technical Excellence for foundry operations. As such, it is unique within the Department of Defense, with the equipment and skilled workforce capable of taking raw material and transforming it into equipment that can help protect our soldiers across the world. In an unpredictable international environment, keeping this capability within the Department of Defense is critical. It allows our armed services to adapt to changing needs and emerging conflicts quickly.

In order to make that capability as strong as possible, we must ensure that Rock Island Arsenal and other industrial facilities within the Department of Defense have the necessary workload to maintain critical capabilities and hone new ones. In this year's National Defense Authorization Act, I ask you to include policies that will support that workload and give these facilities the flexibility they need to succeed.

First, I ask you to encourage the production of items that are currently purchased from foreign entities in military arsenals, depots and other organic facilities. In a time of increasing threats across the globe, making the equipment our warfighters need in America is a step to protect them from those who would wish to do them harm. Further, these federal funds are best used supporting American workers, including the skilled civilians who work in our arsenals and depots.

Second, I ask you to give the Secretary of Defense the authority to allow Army arsenals to adjust the labor rates charged to customers throughout the year. Private companies have the flexibility to adjust based on market conditions and workload. To help supplement their workload from the Department of Defense, arsenals would be better able to compete for contracts and form public-private partnerships if they had this flexibility as well.

Language to further both of these goals was included in H.R. 4909, the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017*, when it was approved by the Committee and passed on the House floor last year, and I respectfully request that you include it again.

As a nation, we cannot afford to let this workforce's critical manufacturing skills decline or disappear. The Rock Island Arsenal has been there for our fighting men and women in uniform and I am committed to making sure this always remains the case.

Thank you again for this opportunity and for your consideration. I look forward to working with you to keep the Rock Island Arsenal strong.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cheri Bustos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress