

CAPITOL OFFICE:  
2313 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-2472

MANKATO OFFICE:  
527½ SOUTH FRONT STREET  
MANKATO, MN 56001  
(507)388-2149

ROCHESTER OFFICE:  
1202½7TH STREET NW,  
SUITE 211  
ROCHESTER, MN 55901  
(507) 388-2149

TOLL FREE#:  
(877) 846-9259



**TIMOTHY J. WALZ**  
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
FIRST DISTRICT, MINNESOTA  
[WWW.WALZ.HOUSE.GOV](http://WWW.WALZ.HOUSE.GOV)

AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE  
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

24 April, 2017

The Honorable Mac Thornberry  
Chairman  
Committee on the Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**Statement for the Record Regarding the National Defense Authorization Act of 2018**

Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, esteemed Members of the House Armed Services Committee:

I submit this testimony to express my strong support for the inclusion of several efforts within the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). These efforts will serve to better the lives of our constituents serving in the Armed Forces of this great nation, and strengthen our national security as a whole.

During the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War, nearly 700,000 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines deployed to Iraq and the surrounding areas, answering our nation's call to arms. Following the war, many veterans began to experience multiple, complex and persistent symptoms that have not to-date been explained by traditional medical diagnoses. Gulf War Illness has become that generation's Agent Orange. This illness could possibly affect as many as 250,000 veterans.

It is imperative that DoD coordinate with the Veterans Affairs Administration and the Gulf War Illness Research Program Consortium, part of the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program, to declassify specific information necessary to enable the diagnosis and treatment of Gulf War Illness. It has been over 26 years since the war ended, and the necessary classified records should reasonably be expected to be declassified in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

Currently we find our military actively fighting two unconventional wars, and preparing for the possibility of a third and even fourth simultaneous, conventionally focused fight. The requirements we as a nation continue to place upon our military are ever increasing, which for the last almost two decades has necessitated continuous call-up of the reserve component. The contemporary National Guard and Reserve Components (RC) have increasingly become operationally vital to the conduct of ongoing operations and contingency plans. To this end, I must insist upon the fair treatment of our reserve components, and the proper attention and planning for their continued operationalization.

The Reserve Component Benefits Parity Act, introduced by Representatives Palazzo, Franks, Shea-Porter and myself, is an important step towards ensuring fairness for our reserve component troops who are involuntarily mobilized to serve their nation under Title 10 U.S.C., §12304b. Many Members of Congress have requested its inclusion as a legislative proposal within this NDAA, and the bill has garnered broad bipartisan support, with over 50 members committing to cosponsor the measure. This legislation supports previous Department of Defense (DoD) efforts to provide parity in benefits under §12304b via amendment to titles 5, 10, 37, and 38 U.S.C. The Army Transition Plan, dated November, 2016, also identifies that rectification of this issue is vitally important to the reserve components and military as a whole. Inclusion of this legislation will correct the health care, education, leave, pay, and retirement benefits applicable to RC service members who mobilize under §12304b.

Increases in readiness must also accompany the increased operationalization of the reserve components. To do so requires more training days annually than have been required in the past, for which this committee has thoughtfully provided authorization and appropriate increases to funding. This fundamental shift towards an operational reserve, though resulting in enhanced readiness, comes at a cost to employers. Employers are decreasingly likely to hire traditional National Guard and Reserve Component members given their increased utilization over the last several years, and which is projected to continue indefinitely. I encourage that the strategic implications of this shift be comprehensively researched by DoD and communicated to employers across our nation's communities.

RC full-time manning authorizations have been steadily declining over several years, despite the aforementioned increased operational use of RC forces and overall end strength additions. Active Guard and Reserve service members are vital to the readiness of RC units, performing all of the administrative and day to day tasks that enable ready units and effective training. In order to ensure that DoD's RC forces are ready and able to conduct their wartime missions when called upon, adequate full-time manning authorizations and appropriations are necessary. I request that the committee consider inclusion of report language to detail issues pertaining to full time manning authorizations and the appropriate levels for each service.

To better qualify for and obtain civilian employment, our reserve component members often rely upon the assistance of DoD educational assistance programs. Recently, interpretation of DoD Instruction 1322.5 prompted an advisory from the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) which stated that FTA could no longer be used concurrently with Chapters 1606/1607 of the GI Bill. This change seems on the surface discriminatory towards the reserve component, placing an unsustainable strain on individual State tuition reimbursement programs, forcing them to absorb

added expenses which were typically covered by federal funds. I request that the committee include report language to encourage DoD to address this issue, identifying any differences between the active and reserve components utilization of Federal Tuition Assistance in conjunction with GI Bill benefits.

As DoD continues to include in its planning the RC forces necessary to ensure our national security, it has become apparent that more flexible authorities for their utilization have become necessary. A flexible RC involuntary mobilization period to achieve common a Boots on Ground time of 9 months for known requirements, supporting National Commission on the Future of the Army recommendation #31, and Holistic Army Aviation Task Force report recommendation #25, would allow this flexibility. I request that the committee include report language that would direct coordination for a joint report by DoD, National Guard Bureau, and the Army Reserve detailing proposals which would increase the flexibility of RC utilization

Thank you for allowing me to speak in front of this committee, and I look forward to the continuation of our work to provide for the security of America, and care for those who have and continue to serve this nation in uniform.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Timothy J. Walz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Timothy J. Walz  
Member of Congress