

**TITLE:** **Speak: House Armed Services Committee  
(HASC) Members Day Hearing**

**DATE:** Thursday, April 11, 2024

**TIME:** 9:00am

**LOCATION:** 2118 RHOB

## Talking Points

- Thank you, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith, for holding this hearing.
- Today, I'm here to discuss three of my legislative priorities, focused on improving infrastructure in and around our military installations, affordable housing for our nations' veterans and servicemembers and, lastly, maternal health care for our servicemembers and their families.
- But first, I will touch on the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP) and the Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP).
- I represent Washington's Sixth Congressional District, home to Naval Base Kitsap in Bremerton. Kitsap is home to one of the Navy's four public shipyards: the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PSNS).
- PSNS plays an outsized role for the Department of Defense's current priority theater – INDOPACOM – in that it is the Navy's only dry dock on the West Coast capable of performing carrier work.
- As you know, in 2018, the Navy released its 20-year, \$21-billion Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program – or SIOP – to revitalize and modernize infrastructure at the shipyards, increase climate resilience, and improve resistance to natural disasters.
- The timely execution of SIOP is vital to the Navy's mission, to the security of the work being done in the yards, and to our national security.

- Any delays or shortfalls in funding for SIOP could result in additional deterioration and damage to the already substandard facilities, utilities, dry docks, equipment, and information technology infrastructure at the four public shipyards. PSNS has also faced seismic mitigation needs. Without robust funding, our shipyards will be unable to meet current and future demands of the fleet.
- Additionally, the Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP) was created in 2019 to help communities around military installations address infrastructure deficiencies.
- This is a unique program because it allows the Defense Department to partner with local communities and share the often expensive costs of infrastructure upgrades.
- So, I appreciate your consideration of my request to prioritize funding for the SIOP, including continued seismic mitigation efforts, and my request for authorizing \$100 million for DCIP, to grow this important program.
- Second, I want to bring the VALID Act to your attention.
- The VALID Act is bipartisan, bicameral, and focuses on affordable housing, specifically for our nation's veterans.
- One important way we can honor their sacrifice is by ensuring those who serve can achieve their dream of one day owning a home.
- VA home loans can offer veterans, active duty servicemembers, reservists, and national guard members advantages over other loan options, including lower down payments, more favorable interest

rates, and low closing costs, often saving tens of thousands of dollars over the life of the loan.

- Despite these benefits, overall usage of VA home loans is surprisingly low, with only 10 to 15 percent of veterans annually reported as using the benefit.
- Providing a simple update to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's existing "Informed Consumer Choice Disclosure Notice" will help close that loop and ensure veterans and servicemembers are aware of their hard-earned VA loan benefit.
- Specifically, the bill will add VA home loans to the current disclosure form lenders provide to prospective home buyers, which right now only compares conventional and FHA loan options.
- Several members of your committee have cosponsored the bill, and it's supported by stakeholder organizations including the Veterans Association of Real Estate Professionals, Veterans United Home Loans, Military Officers Association of America, National Association of Realtors, and Veterans of Foreign Wars.
- Lastly, I plan to introduce the MIDWIVES for Service Members Act of 2024".
- This legislation would direct DOD to develop and establish a five-year demonstration project designed to evaluate the cost, quality of care, and impact on maternal and fetal outcomes of using Certified Professional Midwives (CPM) and Certified Midwives (CM) under the TRICARE program.
- Like the doula and lactation counselors pilot program in the fiscal year 2021 NDAA, this bill aims to expand health care access in my

district, which is becoming a maternity care desert after the labor and delivery unit at Naval Hospital Bremerton (NHB) closed its doors in 2018.

- I am grateful for the tremendous dedication and sacrifice of those who have served, and I'm committed to ensuring they receive the care and benefits that they deserve – and have earned. We must expand and increase the quality of and access to maternal care nationwide.
- Thank you again for your time and for your leadership on these issues.
- I look forward to working with you to move these critical pieces of legislation forward.
- And I yield back.