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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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BATTLEGROUND LEADERSHIP
REPRESENTATIVE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEES ON
ENERGY & WATER DEVELOPMENT,
& RELATED AGENCIES
DEFENSE

May 15, 2025

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the House Armed Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide recommendations for the fiscal year (FY) 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

As you know, Nevada plays a critical role in our nation's security. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Defense, and previously a member of the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, I have seen firsthand the many ways in which Nevada is leading the way in securing our country and our allies.

At Nellis Air Force Base, for example, the U.S. Air Force conducts advanced combat aviation training, ensuring airmen have the training required to secure our nation's interests. This includes at the Nevada Test and Training Range (NTTR) — the largest contiguous air and ground space available for peacetime military operations in the free world — making the state a leader in test and training for our armed services and ensuring that our warfighters have the skills and equipment needed for today and into the future. And at Creech Air Force Base, airmen operate some of the most advanced remotely piloted aircraft in the world, flying attack and reconnaissance missions abroad to protect U.S. and allied assets. Creech AFB is an acknowledged center of excellence for uncrewed aircraft systems and is the chosen site of the Collaborative Combat Aircraft Experimental Operations Unit which will define the tactics, techniques, procedures for how we integrate this critical weapon system into our force design.

Nevada also plays an important role in the nuclear security enterprise. At the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS), scientists and engineers ensure the nation's nuclear weapons remain safe, secure, and effective without full-scale nuclear testing as well as protect against global and homeland nuclear threats. Finally, critical minerals remain crucial to the defense industrial base as virtually every Defense Department system relies upon them. Nevada contains known occurrences or deposits of 33 of the 50 minerals identified as "Critical Minerals" by the U.S. Department of the Interior. Further, MP Materials, which is headquartered in Nevada's Third District, runs the largest rare earth mine in North America and will be central to the U.S. onshoring critical minerals.

As you begin to assemble the FY26 NDAA, I ask that you consider the following items, which builds on Nevada's great strengths to help make our country stronger.

1. Nuclear Ecosystem Drone Defense (NEDD) Act (H.R.2205)

Unauthorized incursions by unmanned aerial systems (UAS), commonly known as drones, into sensitive areas pose a serious threat to America's national security. As drones become ubiquitous, and their capabilities become more sophisticated, the potential for a catastrophic incident rises.

Nowhere is this threat more real than throughout our nuclear security enterprise. While the Department of Energy has clear authority to protect facilities that house nuclear material, this same clear authority is lacking for facilities and activities critical to the enterprise but that do not themselves house nuclear material. At the Nevada Nuclear Security Site (NNSS), where DOE does not have clear authority to protect against unauthorized drones, there were six unauthorized drone sightings between 2022 and 2024. Likewise, at Los Alamos National Laboratory, another unprotected site, there were five suspicious activity incidents involving drones between 2023 and 2024.

The NEDD Act would address this gap before an incident occurs. This bill addresses deficiencies in the DOE cUAS authorities defined in "50 USC 2661: Protection of certain nuclear facilities and assets from unmanned aircraft" by expanding the definition of covered assets to include facilities that research, design, manufacture, or produce non-nuclear components for nuclear weapons and vehicles owned or contracted by the United States to transport nuclear weapons or components. Further, this bill will give the DOE authorities to test cUAS technology against representative threats by adding the DOE to exempted entities listed in Section 1823(b) of PUBLIC LAW 118-31. This exemption has already been granted to the Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, Department of State, and the Department of Justice.

2. Modifying the Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP) – 15% Set Aside

Congress first established the Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP) in the FY19 NDAA. This program provides competitive grants to support projects that are near, but not on, military installations to address "deficiencies in community infrastructure, supportive of a military installation, in order to enhance military value, installation resilience, and military family quality of life." Between FY 2020 and FY 2024, the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation awarded 78 projects representing \$396 million in federal funding, \$270 million in non-federal funding, and \$666 million in total project cost.

Projects are selected for funding under DCIP based, in part, on which of four categories they fall under in a priority ranking list. Projects that "will enhance military value at a military installation," for example, receive top priority in the ranking.

Unfortunately, projects that "will enhance military family quality of life at a military installation" are ranked last in the four-category prioritization list. Because DCIP is oversubscribed, this means that quality of life projects are almost never selected because other projects higher on the prioritization list are allocated all of the funding.

To ensure that some amount of funding is allocated under DCIP for quality of life issues, I believe we should create a 15% set-aside for projects that would address quality of life issues. This limited percentage would provide meaningful resources to these important types of projects without significantly hindering funding for other DCIP-eligible projects.

3. Military and Educational Data Integration Act (H.R.1573)

Serving our country in the armed forces is an honor and a legitimate career path for students with a wide variety of professional and academic interests. Unfortunately, we have a critical gap in information that prevents schools from effectively informing students about the diverse and rewarding career options available within the military and verifying that they have adequately prepared students for these careers.

The Military and Educational Data Integration Act helps address this gap by requiring the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security to establish a data sharing process to provide state educational agencies with information about military enlistment data to better inform both high school students and educators on military careers and more accurately track the outcome of students who choose a career in the military after graduation. With accurate and timely data, educators can provide students with a clearer understanding of the benefits and opportunities military service offers, ranging from engineering to healthcare roles.

4. Creech Air Force Base Assignment Incentive Pay

Airmen stationed at Creech Air Force Base have dealt with numerous quality of life issues for decades. This includes a lack of base housing, a decrease in Basic Allowance for housing by 9.3% in FY24 despite Las Vegas cost of living and utilities increasing 33% more than national average, and a lack of childcare on base or in Indian Springs forcing members on 24/7 shiftwork to commute over 60 minutes for reliable childcare. Further, the base has no commissary, base exchange, military and family readiness center, wellness center, on-base lodging, outdoor recreation, or other standard quality of life amenities meant to offset costs on service members. The base also has a minimally viable medical facility that lacks women's health services, specialty care, and inadequate staff to meet medical requirements. Due to lack of housing, childcare, and medical care, Airmen commute an average of 60-120 miles per day. The net effect results in our junior Airmen with dependents exceeding their net income by a range of \$442 to \$1,023 per month. In the 118th Congress, I advocated for the Air Force to approve assignment incentive pay. Unfortunately, the Air Force disapproved the Assignment Incentive Pay request for Creech. The decision was made based on not meeting eligibility criteria regarding personnel shortages.

In the 119th Congress, I hope to work with the Armed Services Committee to advance legislation to help offset some of the financial burden facing our Airmen at Creech. Further, I hope to work with the Committee, the Appropriations Committee, and the base to get appropriate DD Form 1391s in the system, allocate funding to planning and design, and get these projects that address the base's inadequate infrastructure in the PB, UPL, or FYDP. Creech AFB is the center of excellence for the remotely piloted aircraft that underpin our nation's defense. With the pivot to more remotely piloted vehicles in our inventory we must deal with these systemic issues as we look to modernize.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susie Lee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susie Lee

Member of Congress