

Member Day Testimony on National Defense Authorization Act of 2026 Priorities
House Armed Services Committee

May 15, 2025

Rep. Kevin Mullin (CA-15)

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony to the Committee about my priorities for the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of Fiscal Year 2026.

I respectfully request that you include the following provisions:

1. Empty Lots to Housing Act

There is broad, bipartisan agreement that the United States is in the midst of a severe housing crisis. Nationwide, we are short nearly 4.9 million homes, and one in four renters spends more than half their income on rent. To address this, we need to increase housing supply—especially near public transit. That is why I introduced the *Empty Lots to Housing Act*, a bipartisan bill that would grant the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) the authority to allow state and local agencies to repurpose underutilized land acquired with FHWA funds for transit-oriented development, including affordable housing.

To take just one example, in my district, a mostly vacant parking lot near a rapid transit station, which was purchased by our transportation agency decades ago with FHWA funds, could be redeveloped into housing. Both the local agency and FHWA support this initiative, but FHWA does not currently have the authority to approve this change in use of the land. This bill would remove that barrier, extending to FHWA the same flexibility Congress granted to the Federal Transit Administration in Section 6609 of the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022*, 49 U.S.C. § 5334(h)(1). **I respectfully request the Committee include the *Empty Lots to Housing Act* in the base text of this year's NDAA.** This is a simple, bipartisan step that would help communities unlock land for urgently needed housing without new federal spending.

2. Broaden Technology Scope at Energy Resilience Testbeds

Energy resilience is essential to maintaining uninterrupted operations at military installations, especially in the face of evolving threats and aging infrastructure. To ensure our military installations remain at the forefront of innovation, we should expand the list of technologies tested at Energy Resilience Testbeds. The current list, set in 2022, is limited and leaves out important innovations. **Please consider including in the base text the following technologies to the list of eligible projects for Prototype and Demonstration Projects for Energy Resilience: microgrids, advanced solar, grid-enhancing technologies, artificial intelligence**

for energy systems, and wireless power. Expanding the list will help the Department of Defense stay ahead of emerging energy challenges and better support mission needs.

3. Expand Risk Assessments to Include All Natural Hazards

Preparing military infrastructure for the full range of natural hazards is crucial to ensuring its long-term resilience and operational readiness. Currently, the Department of Defense risk assessments leave out major threats. **Please consider including in the base text the following natural hazards to consider for risk assessments for critical infrastructure at military installations: earthquakes, tsunamis, windstorms, and wildfires.** Updating the directive to conduct risk assessments to include all natural hazards will lead to a more complete picture of risks and help guide smarter investments in resilience and readiness.

4. Increase Domestic GPS satellite capabilities

American GPS satellites in low Earth orbit (LEO) are particularly vulnerable to outages from accidents or intentional attack, which would be catastrophic to global logistics, transportation, financial systems, or national defense systems. Our current GPS technology also lags behind countries like China, which has built out its advanced satellite navigation technology and manufacturing sectors. Currently, if American GPS satellites go offline, they are difficult to replace and the replacement deployment process is lengthy.

I respectfully request that you include my stand alone bill that bolsters the LEO Positioning, Navitation, and Timing (PNT) Prototype and Pathfinder program and to support the development of next-generation satellite navigation technology in the U.S.

Currently, China operates 45 next-generation navigation satellites, while the U.S. operates none. In the meantime, major U.S. industries – such as farming and construction – have integrated Chinese services to fill gaps in capacity, and they risk becoming dependent on such services absent an American alternative. Next generation LEO PNT satellites are both smaller, making them easier to stockpile, and easier to launch. Both capabilities could be critical in the event of a satellite outage that would require rapid deployment and replacement of GPS capabilities.

5. Basic Needs Allowance Eligibility Based on Federal Poverty Line

As you likely know, the Basic Needs Allowance (BNA) was established in the FY22 NDAA for military families whose gross household income fell below 130% of the Federal Poverty Line. The BNA is an additional component of servicemembers' salaries that raises their household income to a certain threshold – originally 150% of FPL. A panel authorized by Congress on military quality of life recommended increasing the threshold to 200%, which Congress enacted in the FY25 NDAA.

However, the Federal Poverty Line (FPL) does not accurately reflect what it takes for households to meet their basic needs today. The FPL was originally calculated in the 1960s as a multiple of household food costs, and it is annually adjusted based on the Consumer Price Index. As food

costs have become a decreasing share of household budgets, the line has become increasingly out of touch with the true cost of living. With exceptions for Alaska and Hawaii, the FPL is also not adjusted for regional differences, which are often dramatic.

While I strongly support the goals of the BNA, I believe the eligibility threshold may not be truly reflective of servicemembers' reality. Therefore, I ask you to **please consider including in the base text a requirement that the Government Accountability Office study the true cost of living and regional differences in servicemembers' households compared to the FPL for the purpose of calculating the BNA.**

As noted above, the BNA threshold was raised to 200% of the FPL. However, I have observed that this is not yet reflected on all military materials, including websites, which still show a lower threshold. I also request that the base text of the bill **include a requirement that the Department of Defense ensures accurate information regarding eligibility for and clear instructions on how to obtain the BNA is up to date on all military materials**, including websites and HR information, within 30 days of passage of the NDAA or as soon as is practicable.

Thank you again for considering these proposals. And a big thanks in advance to you and your staff for your hard work in crafting an eventual bill.