

**CONGRESSMAN JOE NEGUSE**  
**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**MEMBERS DAY TESTIMONY**  
**May 20 2025**

---

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members of the House Armed Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the upcoming Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). As you work to finalize the House version of the FY26 NDAA, I request that you include the following provisions, each of which support our national security, would support our veterans, improve housing and health standards for our servicemembers, and protect our national security by supporting research and development. Specifically, I would ask you to consider the following provisions to be included in the FY26 NDAA prior to floor consideration or during the floor amendment process:

- **Review of the Timing of Electronic Medical Record Documents**

- I request you include a provision to require the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) to provide a review to Congress on the average timeline for service members to receive an electronic copy and develop standards based on the review. Accessing medical record documentation and navigating the healthcare system during the transition process has varied for servicemembers—creating barriers for many to reintegrate into civilian life. The Committee made a similar amendment of mine in order last year during floor consideration of the NDAA. I have made adjustments to the previous amendment to address concerns from the last Congress.

- **Separation Stipend**

- I request you include a provision to direct the Secretary of Defense to administer a pilot program to provide financial support to qualified transitioning servicemembers who may experience hardships upon initial transition from service by establishing a sustainability stipend that covers housing and food expenses for a period of 120 days. By carrying out this pilot program, Congress can better understand how to support the most vulnerable servicemembers and veterans—allowing us to provide resources in advance of any additional potential trauma or hardship.

- **Housing Grant Program for Surviving Spouses**

- I request you include a provision to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a pilot program to provide grants to certain surviving spouses of veterans to pay for housing. Housing expenses have continued to increase throughout the country. Providing resources for surviving spouses can help alleviate some of the most pressing stresses following a loss.

- **Forever GI Benefits for Post-9/11 Benefits**

- I request you include a provision to eliminate time limitations for the use of and eligibility for entitlement under the VA post-9/11 educational assistance programs for veterans whose last discharge or release was between October 7, 2001 and December

31, 2012. Our veterans selflessly and unconditionally served our country. Their benefits should not be placed under conditions.

- **Automatic Enrollment in VA Health Systems**
  - I request you include a provision to establish an opt-out enrollment process for eligible service members in the patient enrollment system of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs through the Transition Assistance Program at the DOD. By including this provision, Congress is eliminating a significant barrier for servicemembers to access healthcare during the transition period. The Committee made a similar amendment of mine in order last year during floor consideration of the NDAA. I have made adjustments to the previous amendment to address concerns from the last Congress.
- **National Guard Firefighter Americorps Program**
  - I request you include a provision to establish a comprehensive feasibility study and pilot program to establish a nationwide employment pipeline between AmeriCorps and part-time National Guard and Reserve service members to address critical workforce integration and national security imperatives for members of the Reserve. I specifically request you establish this pilot program to help fill critical workforce gaps for wildland firefighting.
- **Dual Use Data Base to Improve Research for Public Private Cooperation**
  - I request you include a provision to require the DOD, in coordination with Federal labs, to establish a comprehensive shared database to help improve public and private cooperation to benefit national security. By creating a shared, cross agency database, we are helping promote innovation throughout the country, that also supports the overall national security needs of the nation.
- **Space Command Utilization for Fentanyl Trafficking**
  - I request you include a provision to direct Space Command to Coordinate with DHS and DEA to track fentanyl trafficking using satellite technology (through interagency cooperation). Fentanyl continues to impact every community in the nation. Congress should be using every tool available to curb this epidemic.
- **Vietnam Veteran Commemoration Program**
  - I request you include a provision to extend the Vietnam Veteran Commemoration Fund, which expires in November 2025. This widely successful program has provided much deserved support for Vietnam veterans across the nation. It is only right that we continue that good work for our veterans.
- **Best Practices for Implementation of AI**
  - I request you include a provision to require the DOD to establish Artificial Intelligence (AI) best practices for the use of AI with DOD Contractors. This provision would also help establish secure procedures for other agencies. As AI continues to develop and Congress considers potential legislation, we should be working to ensure we are maintaining national security as we utilize this shifting technology.
- **Expansion of FireGuard**
  - I request you include a provision to establish FireGuard (satellite technology operated by the National Guard to help track wildfires) as a program of record. FireGuard is a proven and critical tool for states and the Federal government to respond to wildfires.
- **TriCare Transition Standards**

- I request you include a provision to require an Inspector General Report on the Tricare West to TriWest Transition and development of implementation standards to prevent any future issues with transitions. Constituents across my district have faced unnecessary barriers, many of which prevented access to care. This provision would encourage an opportunity to learn and improve upon previous mistakes.
- **Military Housing Waitlists**
  - I request you include a provision to establish bifurcated reporting requirements by the DOD for better descriptions of who is on the military housing waiting list. This information is currently collected, preventing Congress' ability to fully understand the current housing market for servicemembers.
- **Plan to Develop Rising Insurance Costs for Military Spending**
  - I request you include a provision to direct the DOD to develop a plan on how to respond to rising housing insurance costs and what the impact on overall spending will be as a result. Congress must be fully prepared to provide the necessary funding to maintain insured housing and properties throughout the entire Department.
- **Districting of Military Basic Housing Allowance Rates**
  - I request you include a provision to direct the DOD to review districting for zipcodes and to consider additional costs of living, like local tax rates, outside the current calculations, when establishing Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) for servicemembers. The current calculations for BAH do not adequately reflect the cost of living throughout the country due to not taking these factors into account.

Congress has a ripe opportunity to not only respond to the greatest needs facing DOD, servicemembers, and veterans, but a chance to expand upon our nation's successes. I strongly encourage the Committee to consider the provisions I have highlighted to meet the demands of the time. In closing, thank you Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding some of my NDAA priorities. I look forward to working with the committee on these issues and many more.

Sincerely,



Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress