

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the committee on behalf of the seventy thousand veterans in Washington's Tenth Congressional district. With Joint Base Lewis-McChord in the district I also have the honor of representing more than 15,000 active duty servicemembers. As a member of the Financial Services Committee and Co-Chair of the New Democrat Housing Task Force, I know that owning a home can provide great stability and great anxiety. I believe all of our servicemembers deserve the opportunity to own a home or afford college, and serve our country without worrying about runaway interest rates on their loans and mortgages.

The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act of 2003, or SCRA, caps interest rates at 6 percent for obligations servicemembers entered into before beginning their service. Currently, the servicemember must submit a copy of their military orders to the lender to qualify for the capped interest rate.

However, not all servicemembers have been able to utilize their financial protections under the law. Some servicemembers, such as active duty military officers, receive formal military orders without a set duration of service that includes an end date. We have seen lenders resist lowering interest rates for these servicemembers. No one should have to worry about runaway interest rates while they are serving their country.

This year, as in the past, I will submit an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act to amend the SCRA to make sure servicemembers are able to invoke the crucial financial protections they've earned. It also resolves the issues lenders have had with the 2003 law. Under my proposal, servicemembers without formal military orders can prove their military service and invoke their rights through other means, including a letter from their commanding officer or a certificate from the Department of Defense's own website documenting their active duty status. Allowing these commonsense alternatives to military orders will help ensure all servicemembers can utilize their financial protections.

I know that the NDAA is not the purview of the Veterans Affairs Committee. However, this amendment to the SCRA will be referred to your committee. And so I simply ask that you waive jurisdiction to allow for this crucial update. Similar language has passed in the House in 2015 and 2017. Let's not stop until we get this right. Thank you.