



May 21, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries, Leader Schumer, and Leader McConnell:

The Military Coalition (TMC) represents more than 5.5 million service members, retirees, veterans, their families, and survivors. The House Quality of Life Panel report includes an array of recommendations which TMC supports including in the FY2025 NDAA and Defense Appropriations.

Recruiting goals for FY23 across the Department of Defense fell short by over [25,000 recruits](#). Given that only a fraction of today's young people is eligible to serve, and even fewer have a propensity to do so, this challenging recruiting environment is unlikely to change in the near term. Bold steps to reverse the trend are necessary to ensure the stability of the All-Volunteer Force.

The TMC commends the Quality of Life Panel for recognizing the seriousness of the recruiting shortfalls and the need to support service members and families who safeguard our Nation. The following proposals would positively affect our community.

- **Junior Enlisted Pay Increase** – The proposal to increase pay for E1s-E4s by 15 percent would help relieve the financial strain faced by junior enlisted service members and their families. TMC understands the Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation is scheduled to be released next year; however, the well-known financial struggles experienced by junior enlisted families warrant immediate action.

- **Increase Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH)** – Returning BAH to 100 percent of the rental and utility costs is essential given the continued challenges the current five percent cost-share creates for our community.
- **Increase Basic Needs Allowance (BNA) to 200 Percent of Federal Poverty Guidelines** – Department of Defense data indicates that up to a quarter of the force has experienced food insecurity. The BNA was intended to alleviate that problem by providing a temporary pay boost to families whose pay and household size place them below federal poverty guidelines. However, the current threshold of 150 percent of federal poverty guidelines is too high a barrier, preventing many struggling families from accessing this needed assistance. Expanding the aperture for BNA to 200 percent of the poverty level will provide a vital boost to those who need it most.
- **Standardized Benefits for Child Care Staff Across the Services** – With the increased number of joint bases, it is imperative that programs and policies governing child care are standardized across the services. Ensuring all branches cover 100 percent of child care fees for the first child of staff Child Development Program (CDP) employees will help address staffing shortages and retain child care providers.
- **Fully Funding Child Care Fee Assistance** – The Services’ child care fee assistance programs provide vital financial aid to families who are unable to access care at installation child development centers (CDCs). However, these programs have historically been underfunded, forcing many eligible families to spend months on waiting lists before receiving fee assistance programs. Fully funding the fee assistance program across each of the services will allow more families to find and afford high quality child care.
- **Analysis of Transferability of Benefits Between Child Care Centers** – Allowing employee benefits to transfer between CDCs and ensuring standardization of benefits across the services will support CDP retention efforts.
- **Facilities Sustainment Restoration and Modernization (FSRM) Funding Transparency** – The Military Coalition suggests the FY25 NDAA mandate the DoD create and execute a comprehensive tracking and reporting mechanism for FSRM fund allocations at the installation level. This system should enhance transparency within the military departments, enabling detailed accounting of deferred maintenance decisions and their potential implications for facilities.
- **Analysis of Costs of Unaccompanied Housing vs. BAH** – Ensuring quality housing for all service members remains a priority of TMC. While steps have been taken to address family housing, the problems coming to light for barracks and dormitories are concerning. Comparing unaccompanied housing versus the cost of BAH will help ensure we are delivering housing for all troops to standard.
- **Expand the Military Spouse Career Accelerator Pilot Program and Strengthen Relationships with Chambers of Commerce** – The unprecedented success of the Military Spouse Career Accelerator Pilot (MSCAP) in its initial year is evidence that solving the military spouse unemployment crisis will take a multipronged approach. TMC agrees with the Panel’s recommendation to make this pilot a permanent program.

- **Support Interstate Licensure Compacts** – Much progress has been made to alleviate the obstacles for spouses in licensed fields; however, DoD must continue its vital work with the Council of State Governments to develop additional interstate compacts which provide a more comprehensive solution for spouses transferring a license across state lines.
- **Expansion of Child Care Access to Military Spouses Seeking Employment** – The 2021 Active-Duty Spouse Survey revealed military spouses spend an average of 19 weeks following a military-mandated move to find employment. TMC strongly supports an expansion of CDP access from 90-days to 180-days for unemployed spouses actively seeking work.

We appreciate your leadership and focus on identifying ways to better care for our service members and their families. Addressing these quality of life issues will help safeguard the economic security of our military families in the face of extraordinary pressures and demonstrate a commitment to addressing current recruiting challenges. Supporting these actions will reinforce your commitment to those who provide the solid foundation for our All-Volunteer Force.

Lastly, as you work to enact and authorize the recommendations of the Quality of Life Panel we ask you to also provide sufficient funding to fully resource and execute these improvements without levying unfunded mandates onto the Defense Department. This will help ensure these improvements are realized in a timely and effective manner.

Sincerely,



Jack Du Teil  
President  
The Military Coalition

cc:

House and Senate Appropriations Committees  
House and Senate Armed Services Committees

### **TMC Organizations**

Air and Space Forces Association (AFA)

Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)

Association of the United States Navy (AUSN)

Blinded Veterans Association (BVA)

Blue Star Families

Commissioned Officers Association of the US Public Health Service (COA)

Chief Warrant Officers Association of the US Coast Guard (CWOA)  
Fleet Reserve Association (FRA)  
Gold Star Wives of America (GSW)  
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)  
Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America (JWV)  
Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America (MCA)  
Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)  
Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)  
Military Order of the World Wars (MOWW)  
National Military Family Association (NMFA)  
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association (NERA)  
Non Commissioned Officers Association (NCOA)  
Service Women's Action Network (SWAN)  
The Independence Fund (TIF)  
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)  
United States Army Warrant Officers Association (USAWOA)  
USCG Chief Petty Officers Association (CPOA)  
Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)  
Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)  
Wounded Warrior Project (WWP)