



ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

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August 11, 2020

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Thornberry:

The Association of the United States Army (AUSA) appreciates the work of the House Armed Services Committee in its continued efforts to maintain a strong national defense. As you prepare to conference the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, we take this opportunity to offer our views and recommendations on selected provisions of the House and Senate bills.

We commend Congress' ongoing efforts to improve the Uniformed Code of Military Justice, particularly in matters related to victims' rights; however, we remain strongly opposed to the Service Academy Pilot Program contained in the House bill. Removing commanders from matters of military justice will undermine the critical role and authority of the commander and will cause unneeded disruption across the force.

Members of the Reserve Component remain mobilized across the United States for COVID-19 response missions. While AUSA applauds language in the House and Senate bills that extends transitional health benefits to National Guard members activated in response to the pandemic, members of the Reserve have also played a significant role. AUSA recommends that the provision be expanded to include all members of the Reserve Component – National Guard and Reserve.

We ask conferees to recede to House Sections 715 and 716 that would slow the Defense Department's plans to cut the military's medical force and restructure its facilities. The critical role the military's medical force has played in the pandemic response only reinforces our opinion that transferring and consolidating medical treatment facilities while simultaneously making significant reductions to medical billets is not a prudent course of action.

AUSA supports House language that instructs the Defense Department to update the business case analysis for the Defense Resale System consolidation. Not only are the military exchanges and commissaries a significant non-pay benefit, a portion of the profits are used to fund various Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) activities. The financial viability of consolidated exchanges and commissaries and the continued ability to provide earnings to support MWR activities must not be jeopardized.

AUSA thanks members in both chambers for language that addresses quality of life issues for the military force and their families. Provisions contained in the House and Senate bills that ensure military personnel and their families live in quality housing as well as provisions that standardize the Exceptional Family Member Program and improvements to child care access are applauded. We also appreciate Congressional efforts to assist military spouses with employment obstacles. Finally, we support House language that allows for the continuation of parental leave for primary and secondary caregivers in the event the child dies.

Thank you for your stalwart service to our nation and your leadership in Congress.

Sincerely,

Carter F. Ham
General, U.S. Army, Retired
President & CEO