July 8, 2025

Chairman Roger F. Wicker Ranking Member Jack Reed

Senate Committee on Armed Services Senate Committee on Armed Services

228 Russell Senate Office Building 228 Russell Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510 Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Mike Rogers Ranking Member Adam Smith

House Committee on Armed Services House Committee on Armed Services

2216 Rayburn House Office Building 2216 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Wicker and Rogers, and Ranking Members Reed and Smith,

On behalf of The American Legion and our 1.5 million dues-paying members, thank you and the members of your committees for supporting our nation's servicemembers, veterans, and their families. As an organization of veterans who fought for our freedoms, The American Legion believes the national security of the United States of America is upheld by maintaining a well-funded Department of Defense (DOD), high levels of quality of life in the military community, and a superior and lethal military force. As your committees develop the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we urge Congress to include the following provisions in the bill's final version.

**Military Quality of Life:** The American Legion believes that Congress must continue to improve the quality of life for servicemembers and military families. Factors that contribute to quality of life include proper compensation, appropriate housing for families and single servicemembers, quality healthcare for servicemembers and their families, both domestically and overseas, reasonably priced commissaries, equal opportunities for career development, and access to affordable childcare. We support increased funding for new barracks and renovation of qualified barracks and family housing, expanding financial assistance to servicemembers for private and public childcare facilities, granting military construction authority for building new child-development centers, and retaining military commissaries and exchanges, MWR programs, educational benefits, and spouse employment programs.

**Lethality of the Armed Forces:** The continued modernization of the armed forces is essential for maintaining military superiority and ensuring national security in an increasingly complex and dynamic global environment. The American Legion supports modernization, including updating military infrastructure, rebuilding the defense industrial base, increased funding for research and development, integration of emerging technologies, and enhancing talent acquisition by reforming recruitment strategies and retention incentives to military personnel with advanced technical skills.

**Funding of the State Department and Foreign Operations:** The American Legion supports adequately funding the State Department to advance American security interests abroad. Diplomats are the first line of defense through relationship-building and promoting foreign policy objectives, possibly preventing the U.S. from entering wars. Underfunding diplomacy risks empowering foreign adversaries, a critical concern to U.S. national security.

**Border Security:** A secure nation begins with secure borders. The American Legion supports increased funding to field advanced technologies to counter threats at ports of entry, greater DHS oversight to eliminate barriers for increased Border Patrol recruitment, and increased funding for DOD counter-narcotics and counter-transnational organized crime missions. National defense begins at home, and this effort is critical to our sovereignty and safety.

**Protect Coast Guard Pay and Entitlements:** The U.S. Coast Guard carries out missions vital to our national security. The American Legion supports legislative actions that guarantee Coast Guard servicemembers get fair pay and full benefits on schedule, particularly during instances of government shutdowns or funding discontinuance. The repeated threat of government shutdowns brings severe and unnecessary hardship to Coast Guard servicemembers.

**Full Accountability and POW/MIAs:** The American Legion remains firmly committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. servicemembers still listed as Prisoners of War or Missing in Action. We support NDAA language that continues to prioritize funding for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), enhances interagency cooperation, and mandates reporting on mission progress. Roughly 81,000 service members remain unaccounted for. Accountability for our missing heroes is a sacred obligation that reflects the values of our nation.

The American Legion applauds the tremendous work of the Senate and House Armed Services Committees in their continued effort to maintain a robust national defense, and we urge quick passage of this legislation. We appreciate your continued leadership and support for these essential issues.

For God and Country,

James A. LaCoursiere, Jr.

National Commander

Cc: Members of the Senate and House Armed Services Committees