

July 9, 2019

Dear Member of Congress,

We, the below signed military, veteran and national security organizations and leaders, urge you to support Representative Jackie Speier's amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) providing clarification for non-discrimination policy with respect to service in the Armed Forces. Additionally, if this amendment is included, we urge you to vote for final passage of the NDAA.

As organizations and individuals who support and advocate for the brave military members who volunteer to serve our country, we believe it is vitally important that all service members and qualified recruits are treated equally, based on their merits, with dignity and respect.

Many of us have served in the military or in national security roles despite historical barriers for people who share our background, appearance, convictions and stories. Many of us also work for organizations that advocate for members of underrepresented groups who have made sacrifices for our nation. These experiences inform our belief that a military open to all who meet standards, without prejudicial barriers, makes our nation stronger and safer. We also know firsthand the power of Congress' voice in signalling acceptance and support for those who serve despite facing discrimination.

We agree with the Department of Defense which has stated policies of non-discrimination enhance military readiness — treating those who serve by one standard, applied to all. Specifically, the 2016 DoD Directive 1020.02E, Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity in the DoD, states equal opportunity is “critical to mission accomplishment, unit cohesiveness, and military readiness.”

The directive states that all service members should be “afforded equal opportunity in an environment free from harassment, including sexual harassment, and unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including gender identity), or sexual orientation.”

The Speier Amendment would put into statute the Department of Defense's own equal opportunity standards as outlined in the above directive. This legislation supports military values and military readiness, in the same language that the military uses.

If the Speier Amendment is included in the NDAA, we ask that you also support its passage on the House floor. Passing a defense bill from the House that includes the values of inclusiveness and diversity is the best way to stand with those impacted by the Administration's policies. Failure to pass the NDAA will hamper the credibility of these arguments in future national security conversations and make it impossible to include pro-diversity language in the final, conferenced NDAA.

We urge you to support this commonsense amendment and the NDAA.

Respectfully,

Modern Military Association of America
Blue Star Families
National Military Family Association
Service Women's Action Network
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Truman National Security Project
Third Way
Ray Mabus, 75th U.S. Secretary of the Navy
Eric Fanning, 22nd U.S. Secretary of the Army
Lawrence Korb, Former Assistant Secretary of Defense
Tamara Cofman Wittes, Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State
Eric A. Greenwald, Former Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Cybersecurity
Kathleen H. Hicks, Former Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
Jeffrey Prescott, Former Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Ben Rhodes, Former Deputy National Security Advisor to the President
Jake Sullivan, Former National Security Advisor to the Vice President
Colin Kahl, Former National Security Advisor to the Vice President
Julianne Smith, Former Deputy National Security Advisor to the Vice President
Howard Berman, Former Member of Congress
Bishop Garrison, Director, National Security Outreach, Human Rights First
Tammy Moore, Senior Advisor, American Red Cross
Annie Pforzheimer, Former U.S. Diplomat
RADM Alan M. Steinman, USPHS/USCG (Ret), Former Director of Health and Safety, U.S. Coast Guard
Suzanne Nossel, Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State
Dana Shell Smith, U.S. Ambassador (Ret)
Mary DeRosa, Professor, Georgetown Law Center
Kayla Maureen Williams
Jung H. Pak, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution