

Duckworth amendment to help prevent troops from going hungry passes Senate as part of NDAA

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WASHINGTON, DC – Combat Veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth's (D-IL) amendment to address food insecurity among active duty Servicemembers and help prevent troops from going hungry passed the Senate today as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Duckworth, who relied on food stamps as a teenager before serving for 23 years in the Reserve Forces, proposed her amendment

requiring the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) to finally begin collecting data on Servicemembers relying on federal hunger assistance programs so that the military and nation have the information necessary to more effectively ensure no one willing to risk their lives for our nation struggles to put food on the table for their families.

“Our military is weakened when tens of thousands of Servicemembers are forced to rely on food stamps to get by and support their families,” said Senator Duckworth. **“As someone whose family depended on food stamps and reduced price meals after my father lost his job, and as someone who served in uniform for most of my adult life, this is personal for me. We must take action. Our nation must do much more to ensure that the brave men and women of our Armed Forces can afford to support their families and not go hungry.”**

Estimates show that low-income Servicemembers spend roughly \$21 million in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, often referred to as food stamps, at commissaries and that roughly 23,000 active-duty Servicemembers used food stamps in recent years, but authoritative figures are not readily available, making addressing this problem difficult. Despite findings that tens of thousands of low-income Servicemembers rely on food stamps, a 2016 Government Accountability Office report found DOD was not fully collecting or analyzing data on how many Servicemembers rely on food assistance programs. The report also found that DOD has not coordinated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to determine how many Servicemembers are enrolled in USDA-run programs like food stamps.

If the Senate-passed NDAA becomes law, Duckworth’s amendment will establish an entity within DOD to coordinate with USDA to collect data on how many active duty Servicemembers are using federal food assistance and why they need to use these programs. The Senator intends to continue pushing to ensure Servicemembers are fully supported by the Defense Department, Congress and their whole nation.