

# **Senate overwhelmingly passes Duckworth NDAA provisions to help small businesses**

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Senate overwhelmingly passed several proposals authored by combat Veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) yesterday to help prevent low-income Servicemembers from going hungry, make it easier for small businesses to get Department of Defense (DOD) contracts, make federal government contracting more efficient, and help ensure the long-term success of the Rock Island Arsenal. Her provisions, which passed as part of the Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), now head to the President's desk to be signed into law. The legislation also includes a provision Duckworth led in the Senate to help small businesses apply for federal, state, and local government contracts.



“The brave men and women in uniform who are deployed across the globe deserve to know that our country stands behind them as they risk their lives to defend our country and our Constitution,” said Senator Duckworth. “While this legislation is not perfect, it reiterates that commitment and I am pleased that so many of my proposals were included in the final bill. When they become law, Illinois’s small businesses will have a better shot at securing new contracts, the Rock Island Arsenal’s long-term future will be more certain, the federal contracting process will become more efficient, and our nation will be one step closer to ensuring that our servicemembers and their families can support their families without worrying about going hungry.”

The NDAA that passed the Senate yesterday, and includes several Duckworth provisions, funds the U.S. Department of Defense, sets our nation’s defense policy and ensures that our Servicemembers have the tools they need to defend our nation. The provisions authored by Senator Duckworth will:

- **Make It Easier for Small Businesses to Get Department of Defense Contracts.** Duckworth’s amendment would help small businesses as they apply for contracting and subcontracting opportunities with the Department of Defense by ensuring Commercial Marketing Representatives (CMRs) at the Small Business Administration are fully empowered to guide them in the process and to advocate for them with the Department of Defense and its contractors. Commercial Market Representatives are located out in our communities, stationed at area offices and play a critical role in linking small businesses with contracting opportunities.
- **Help Prevent Low-Income Servicemembers from Going Hungry.** Surveys have found that as many as 23,000 active duty Servicemembers rely on food stamps to support their families and that active duty Servicemembers spent over \$21 million in SNAP benefits at commissaries between September, 2014 and August, 2015. However, the Department of Defense does not collect data on how many Servicemembers rely on food assistance programs. Duckworth’s amendment would change that by establishing an entity within the DOD to coordinate with the Department of Agriculture to collect and share data on how many active duty Servicemembers are using federal food assistance so the military has the information necessary to effectively ensure no one willing to risk their lives for our nation struggles to put food on the table for their families.
- **Help Ensure Long Term Success of Rock Island Arsenal.** Duckworth, along with U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Joni Ernst (R-IA) filed a bipartisan amendment that will help reduce government waste and ensure the long-term success of the Rock Island Arsenal. The Senators’ bipartisan amendment will ensure DOD first seeks out existing government owned spaces on

military installations like Rock Island to house government offices before leasing commercial space for government purposes. The amendment will also help prevent the Arsenal's closing in any future base realignment and closure (BRAC) processes by ensuring DOD uses Rock Island's facilities more efficiently.

- **Make Government Federal Contracting More Efficient.** Duckworth's good government amendment will improve agency efficiency and reduce wasteful bureaucracy by eliminating red tape that forces contracting officers to waste time and energy writing hundreds of thousands of separate cumbersome contracts to buy basic goods and services that may be purchased faster, at lower cost and with greater oversight, using the existing government purchase card program.

Senator Duckworth also partnered with Representative Stephanie Murphy (D-FL) to successfully include an amendment that would:

- **Support Small Businesses Applying for Government Contracts.** Small businesses are often at a competitive disadvantage to large corporations when applying for federal, state, and local government contracts because of their smaller staffs and limited resources. Duckworth and Murphy's amendment will help small businesses overcome this barrier by authorizing federally supported Procurement Training Assistance Centers (PTACs) to help small businesses navigate complex procurement application procedures and program rules, leveling the playing field for small businesses, which drive our economy.

Senator Duckworth also co-sponsored an amendment from Senator Durbin that was included in the final NDAA bill that will:

- **Protect Military Recruits With Vital Skills from Being Discharged & Deported Due To Immigration Status.** Under the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) program, immigrants with skills that are vital to national security but underrepresented in the U.S. military are given the opportunity to enlist in the Armed Forces. This amendment will protect those MAVNI recruits from the government breaking its promise to them by having their enlistment contracts cancelled, placing them at risk for deportation, while they wait for the background screening process to finish. There are an estimated 1,000 to 1,800 MAVNI recruits – including hundreds of DREAMers – who are currently waiting for the chance to serve our country and swear allegiance to the United States.