



Durbin-Harris legislation to prevent discharge of non-citizen military personnel signed into law

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WASHINGTON - Legislation by U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), vice chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, and U.S. Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA) to retain military personnel in the Military Accessions Vital to National

Interest (MAVNI) program until their background screenings are completed was signed into law today by the President as part of the National Defense Authorization Act



(NDAA).

“When the military can’t find American citizens with the skills it needs to help defend our country, they turn to the MAVNI program,” said Durbin. “These patriotic women and men prepared to lay down their lives for our country will now be permitted to

remain in the military while waiting for their background checks to clear. With all the threats facing the United States today, we simply cannot afford to lose these brave men and women because of a technicality.”

“This an important step for the brave men and women who put their lives on the line to protect people they will never meet and who will never know their names,” said Harris. “This legislation will help ensure that they can continue to serve and not fall victim to a slow bureaucratic process. Immigrants have built this country, and these patriots represent the best of our nation.”

The MAVNI program allows immigrants with skills deemed vital to the national interest to enlist in the Armed Forces. Cosponsored by U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Mark Warner (D-VA), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), the amendment allows MAVNI recruits to remain in the Armed Forces for an additional year while the Department of Defense completes their background checks and security screenings. Under current law, recruits are automatically separated from the Armed Forces after 730 days if they have not yet completed basic training—which no MAVNI recruit can do until they pass the extensive security screening.