

Durbin Statement On Senate Passage Of NDAA

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Vice Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, today released the following statement after voting for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 *National Defense Authorization Act* (NDAA), which includes authorization for \$44 million for vaccine and biotechnology research related to COVID-19:

“The Senate’s passage of the NDAA shows that members on both sides of the aisle are committed to a strong national defense and to the protection of our women and men in uniform. This is especially important in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacts everyone from new recruits training at Naval Station Great Lakes, to our seasoned service members and their families facing multiple deployments, to our National Guardsmen and women engaged in COVID-response.

“Today’s legislation includes many important provisions, including a pilot program at the Joint Munitions Command, headquartered at Rock Island Arsenal, as well as language to support an important and long overdue Military Sexual Trauma pilot program. I hope this legislation can be conferenced quickly and signed by the President without delay.”

Durbin-led measures included in the FY21 NDAA are:

- **Joint Munitions Command.** The bill includes language Durbin requested directing the Army to brief the Committee on the feasibility of a pilot program at the Joint Munitions Command, headquartered at Rock Island Arsenal, for the sustainment of munitions as part of the overall life-cycle management of any given munitions program.
- **Military Sexual Assault.** The bill includes language Durbin requested to urge the Defense Department to expeditiously carry out the Military Sexual Trauma pilot

program he helped establish in the FY19 NDAA, in partnership with civilian institutions and using new models of care. Rush University in Chicago has a successful program that provides critical support, counseling, and health services as it relates to military sexual trauma that could compete for funds under this pilot.

- Bipartisan [amendment](#) expressing support for coordinated action to ensure the security of our Baltic allies – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.
- Bipartisan [provision](#) welcoming Ukraine into NATO's Enhanced Opportunities Partnership Program.

Durbin also helped secure the following measures in the FY21 NDAA:

- **Renaming Confederate Bases.** The bill establishes a commission tasked with removing within three years all names, symbols, displays, monuments, and paraphernalia that honor or commemorate the Confederacy or any Confederate leader from all Defense Department assets.
- **Racial Justice.** The bill also requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to report on the implementation of recommendations and statutory requirements to address racial, ethnic, and gender disparities in the military.
- **PFAS and AFFF.** The bill modifies and makes corrections to the Environmental Restoration Section to include the salts of Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) to be eligible for restoration. It also requires a survey and market research of technologies for phasing out Aqueous Film-Forming Foam (AFFF)—the firefighting foam that contains PFAS. In addition, the bill includes an amendment boosting funding for the first-ever nationwide health study on the impact of PFAS in drinking water conducted by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Earlier this year, the Air Force detected PFAS during site inspections at Scott Air Force Base (AFB), which may be impacting off-base water wells. Since then, Durbin has been pushing for immediate measures to protect the health of residents, including securing funding for PFAS-related clean-up, research, and mitigation work at and near military bases as Vice Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee.

- **Agent Orange Exposure.** The bill includes an amendment, led by Senator Jon Tester (D-MT), which would expand VA's list of medical conditions associated with exposure to Agent Orange to include Bladder Cancer, Hypothyroidism, and

Parkinsonism—health conditions that each meet the historical standard for being added to the presumptive list for service-connection as it relates to Agent Orange exposure.