



BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER

July 10, 2018

Senator John McCain
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Jack Reed
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator James Inhofe
Senate Committee on Armed Services
205 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Mac Thornberry
House Committee on Armed Services
2443 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Adam Smith
House Committee on Armed Services
2264 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman McCain, Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Reed, Ranking Member Smith, and Senator Inhofe:

As you begin conference on the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019, we are reaching out to you to highlight the importance of a flexible personnel system to national security.

The Bipartisan Policy Center's Task Force on Defense Personnel, was convened to address the strategic and personnel challenges facing the Department of Defense. As the co-chairs of the Task Force, we worked to raise awareness of these issues and further, made numerous recommendations for meaningful reforms to both to Congress, the Administration, and the Pentagon.

As you well know, the men and women who volunteer to serve are the foundation of our military, and the key to our military's strength. But the rigid personnel and promotion systems the services currently employ to organize our service members are not optimal to serve the manpower demands placed on our modern and ever-changing military. These stiff systems have made it far too difficult for the services to recruit and retain highly-skilled talent, and were designed for a bygone era. To preserve our edge, these systems require reform; to allow for the flexibility and adaptability required by our National Security Strategy.

To facilitate these reforms, we encourage you to retain the Officer Personnel Reform Management language in the Senate's draft NDAA. This section is full of credible and long recommended reforms that could have a serious positive impact on the military's ability to recruit, retain, and train officers now and into the future.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude for your laudable efforts to improve the experience of millions of service members and their families with provisions included in both House and Senate draft NDAA's that would improve access to and quality of military child care, as well as provisions designed to improve military spousal employment.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on these important issues and thank you again for your leadership.

Sincerely,



Leon Panetta
Former Defense Secretary



Jim Talent
Former Senator



Jim Jones
Former National Security Adviser



Kathy Roth-Douquet
CEO Blue Star Families

Cc: All conferees for the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019