



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL ENGINEERS AFL-CIO & CLC

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December 12, 2023

Dear Senator,

As the Executive Officers of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), representing upwards of 90,000 workers in the federal, public, and private sectors, we are writing regarding our support for the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24). On behalf of our membership – which includes some 20,000 federal employees working for the Department of Navy, the Defense Logistics Agency, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, and other Department of Defense (DoD) components as well as some 20,000 employees working in the aerospace and defense industry – we applaud the bipartisan NDAA conference report and urge you to vote to pass the NDAA for FY2024, H.R. 2670.

The NDAA provides \$874.2 billion for our national defense, including continued infrastructure investments for the submarine industrial base and shipyard infrastructure, depots, and other DoD facilities. We are pleased with the NDAA's inclusion of the following provisions:

- **Section 726, “GAO Study on Health Care Available to Certain Individuals Supporting the Missions of United States Forces Japan and Joint Region Marianas.”** This section tasks GAO to study and report to Congress where adequate health care services are available to DoD civilians stationed overseas in support of U.S. forces in Japan and Guam. IFPTE members are among the 10,000 DoD employees and their families stationed in Japan who are acutely impacted by this dramatic change in healthcare access that occurred over one year ago. These DoD employees and their families who are stationed with them lost timely access to on-base routine, chronic, and necessary healthcare and prescription drug coverage through no fault of their own. The language in this section calls for the GAO and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (DHA) to study and recommend policy and legislative remedies to make sure that DoD employees and their dependents have quality healthcare services and timely access to care.
- **Section 1102, “Authorization to Pay a Living Quarters Allowance for Department of the Navy Civilian Employees Assigned to Permanent Duty in Guam for Performing Work, or Supporting Work Being Performed, Aboard or Dockside, of U.S. Naval Vessels.”** This section will help Navy employees working in Guam to find suitable housing and afford the high cost of housing and utilities on the island.
- **Section 835, “Enhanced Domestic Content Requirement for Major Defense Acquisition Programs.”** This provision supports the U.S. defense industrial base and critical manufacturing capabilities by increasing domestic content requirements for defense acquisition to 65% by 2024 and 75% by 2029. In light of Congress' support for investing in critical industries, advanced manufacturing, and the workforce needed

to support reinvestment in good jobs that support our national defense, this commonsense provision makes sure that defense spending supports the defense industrial base and our national interests.

- **Section 1114, “Including Military Service in Determining Family and Medical Leave Eligibility for Federal Employees.”** This provision allows federal employees who have completed 12 months of honorable active service to carry over those 12 months of service for the purposes of family and medical leave eligibility. This provision supports the recruitment of our nation’s veterans into the federal civil service. It eases veterans' transition into the workforce, which is a win-win for both veterans and service members as well as federal agencies that will benefit from hiring veterans who bring with them skills, leadership, and commitment to service.
- **Section 1851, “Flexibility and Funding for the World Trade Center Health Program.”** We applaud the inclusion of language and authorization to reestablish the \$676 million in funding for the World Trade Center Health Program (WTCHP). This resolves the funding shortfall for the treatment and monitoring of 9/11 first responders and survivors who were exposed to toxins and may suffer from 9/11-related illnesses.

While we fully support passage of H.R. 2670, we are disappointed that the House and Senate did not include language in their respective NDAA bills to allow veterans to receive concurrent retirement pay and disability compensation at a time when Congress overwhelmingly supports standalone legislation to do just that in the Richard Star Act (H.R.1282, S.344). We urge the House and Senate Armed Services Committees and Congress to address this in the next NDAA. We also regret that both chambers included several NDAA provisions that expand direct hiring authorities for DoD civilian personnel. Overreliance and misuse of direct hiring authorities, along with term and temporary hiring, are short-term approaches that have created exceptions to fair, objective, and open competitions for federal hiring and circumvented consideration of internal candidates, overriding Veterans Preference, and excluding qualified candidates that would otherwise be hired under competitive hiring. Finally, we’re disappointed to see language in Section 1101 of the NDAA for FY24 that caps the pay at the GS-10 level for DoD employees whose duties involve diversity, equity, and inclusion education, training, or policy. This provision needlessly undermines diversity efforts across DoD, which hampers the DoD’s efforts to recruit and retain the best civilian workers and support high-performing workplaces.

Despite our concerns, we believe this NDAA includes significant advances for our national security policy. We thank Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jack Reed and Ranking Member Roger Wicker and House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mike Rodgers and Ranking Member Adam Smith for continuing Congress’ bipartisan commitment to passing the NDAA with needed authorizations and policies to provide our nation’s uniformed services and the civilian DoD workforce and private sector defense workers the support they need to advance our national defense. In the coming months, we look forward to working with Congress and Members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees to consider priorities in the NDAA for FY25 that are not included in the NDAA for FY24.

Sincerely,



Matthew S. Biggs
IFPTE President



Gay Henson
IFPTE Secretary-Treasurer