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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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Dear Chairman Adam Smith and Ranking Member Mike Rogers,

Thank you, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Rogers, and the other members of the committee for this opportunity to share some of my priorities as you begin your work on this year's National Defense Authorization Act.

One of the top priorities during my time in Congress has been to ensure our country improves its long-term financial security. I have and will continue to support worthy investments in America and its people. However, I am also continually looking for responsible ways to reduce the cost burden we're placing on future generations by streamlining or modernizing government programs. That is especially true of the Pentagon. There are countless reports and white papers outlining huge areas of potential cost savings. Whether it's merging redundant offices, rethinking IT departments, or updating the acquisition process for new technologies, there are commonsense fixes that would reduce our massive defense budget without undercutting our national security. I haven't supported every NDAA during my time, but I have been proud of the work this committee has done over the past few years to rethink defense spending. I want to see the committee continue this bipartisan work to effectively use the large amounts of taxpayer dollars that go towards our defense.

Last month I had the privilege of talking to members of the Oregon National Guard who are deployed to Poland in support of our NATO allies. It was concerning to hear that their ammunition stockpiles have been significantly depleted. These men and women who are currently stationed in Europe, only have about a quarter of their combat load and almost no training ammunition. Our nation has the greatest fighting force in the world; this is not debatable. A significant reason for this greatness is the training that our men and women receive. This includes their ability to fire their weapons during training exercises. I would like to request that as we continue to provide the much-needed aid to the Ukrainian forces, we also ensure that our troops, including our National Guard and Reservists, have the equipment they need to continue to be high-level functioning forces.

I've also heard from the members of the 142nd Fighter Wing of the Oregon Air National Guard about the state of our F-15s. The Air National Guard F-15 Eagle fleet continues to deteriorate and requires recapitalization with new aircraft – namely the F-15EX – to effectively fulfill its critical role in our national security. That's why it's crucial that we increase funding for F-15 critical priorities under the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account (NGREA), to ensure the continued flight safety, interoperability, and long-term efficacy of our aircraft.

Lastly, my district is fortunate to have a large population of veterans, and I personally believe it is unacceptable when we fail to live up to our commitment to these men and women who put their lives on the line in service to this country and its values. I want the committee to know the impact that changes to Tricare have had on my constituents. These changes have unfairly disadvantaged veterans in my district simply because they live in a state without an active military base. They bear the brunt of increased costs without little prospect of relief. I want to offer my support to work with you all to find a way forward that doesn't penalize veterans based on criteria out of their control.

I want to thank you again Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Rogers for this opportunity to brief the committee. I wish you all the best of luck as you craft the FY23 NDAA. I hope that this year's version continues the bipartisan tradition that we have seen for the last six decades.

Sincerely,



KURT SCHRADER
Member of Congress