

# IMPROVING SERVICEMEMBER QUALITY OF LIFE



***Servicemember quality of life concerns are a major cause of low morale and family stress which are undermining recruitment, retention, and military readiness. The FY25 NDAA will improve the quality of life for servicemembers and their families.***

**Boosting Compensation: *Pay for junior enlisted servicemembers (E-1 – E-4) has failed to remain competitive with the private sector and has not kept pace with inflation. Many military families have had to rely on foodbanks, SNAP, and WIC to put food on the table. The FY25 NDAA -***

- Authorizes a 19.5% pay raise for junior enlisted servicemembers and supports a 4.5% pay raise for all other servicemembers.
- Improves the servicemember cost of living allowance calculation to ensure it properly accounts for inflation, especially for servicemembers based abroad.
- Expands access to the Basic Needs Allowance and requires DoD to reevaluate the allowance for subsistence to ensure it meets the actual cost of necessities.
- Boosts the servicemember housing allowance to cover 100% of the average local area rental rate.

**Improving Housing: *Servicemembers living in unaccompanied housing are exposed to poor conditions like sewage overflows, gas leaks, mold, brown tap water, bedbugs, and rodents. Chronic underfunding of housing maintenance accounts has led to failing infrastructure across the military. The FY25 NDAA -***

- Authorizes an additional \$601 million over the President's request for housing maintenance accounts.
- Requires DoD to develop and implement a strategy to enter into public-private partnerships to lease unaccompanied housing and authorizes \$45 million to carry it out.
- Authorizes over \$693 million to build new family housing units.
- Authorizes \$166 million over the Biden budget to renovate and build new barracks.
- Authorizes an additional \$30 million for a berthing barge to provide a safe and healthy housing alternative for sailors during dry dock availabilities.
- Requires DoD to implement a digital tool for servicemembers to request maintenance and track their requests.
- Enables DoD to renovate and reuse historic housing units in a rapid and cost-efficient manner.
- Requires DoD to designate personnel responsible for the oversight of unaccompanied housing and increase the cadence of inspections.
- Improves transparency and provides additional Congressional oversight of housing maintenance accounts.
- Requires DoD to consider providing free wireless internet access to servicemembers in all unaccompanied housing facilities.

**Ensuring Access to Medical Care: *Servicemembers can face wait times of up to 2 months to see a specialty medical provider and more than 2-3 weeks for their first appointment with a mental health provider. The FY25 NDAA –***

- Enables DoD to recruit and employ additional mental health providers by excluding them from statutory caps on military end strength.
- Provides servicemembers with direct access to specialty medical providers by waiving the TRICARE referral requirement.
- Expands the number of doctors working for DoD by extending recruitment bonuses and providing for increased compensation.
- Increases the number of nurses working for DoD by waiving prior federal service hiring requirements.
- Establishes a 3-day access to care standard for servicemember and dependents requiring behavioral healthcare appointments.
- Requires DoD to report to Congress on access to care data for all healthcare services to have a better picture of where gaps exist.
- Requires DoD to develop recommendations to fill healthcare staffing shortages at Military Treatment Facilities in rural areas.
- Authorizes servicewomen and dependents to switch their TRICARE health plans at pregnancy.
- Expands medical license portability for healthcare providers who provide medical services to reservists.
- Provides access to dental care under TRICARE for members of the reserve.
- Directs DoD to enter into agreements with organizations to train DoD physicians on arthroscopic surgery.

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**Increasing Access to Childcare: DoD struggles with a shortage of childcare workers and an insufficient number of childcare facilities, which forces military families to wait months for childcare slots and fee assistance programs for off-installation childcare. The FY25 NDAA -**

- Authorizes over \$204 million for the construction of new childcare centers.
- Fully funds childcare fee assistance programs to eliminate all fee assistance wait lists for eligible families.
- Makes pay for childcare staff at DoD childcare centers competitive with private industry.
- Requires DoD to cover childcare fees for the first child of childcare staff enrolled at a DoD Child Development Center and authorizes DoD to cover the cost of additional children.
- Requires DoD to prioritize rural areas for expansion of its in-home childcare program.
- Enhances Congressional oversight of DoD childcare programs.

**Supporting Spouses: Frequent and unpredictable moves mean that military spouses often have trouble finding and maintaining employment. Over 20% of military spouses are unemployed, making it one of the highest unemployment demographics in the US. The FY25 NDAA -**

- Makes it easier for military spouses to transfer professional licenses between states.
- Permanently authorizes the Military Spouses Career Accelerator which provides employment support to military spouses.
- Extends the DoD's authority to quickly fill open civilian positions with qualified military spouses.
- Provides additional flexibility to DoD to keep military spouses employed when a servicemember changes duty locations.
- Expands access to DoD childcare for military spouses when they are seeking employment.

## **Improving DoD Schools**

- Establishes a school choice pilot program for servicemember parents stationed in Bahrain.
- Authorizes over \$255 million to build new schools for children of servicemembers.
- Authorizes \$50 million in Impact Aid assistance to public schools with military dependent students and an additional \$20 million in assistance to local schools teaching children with severe disabilities.
- Improves teacher training programs to ensure better instruction at DoD schools.
- Provides bonuses to recruit qualified teachers for DoD schools.
- Keeps in place current student to teacher ratios through the 2029-2030 school year.

## **Enhancing Career Transition Assistance**

- Allows Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) to participate in the Transition Assistance Program in order to present information on how VSOs may assist servicemembers.
- Ensures the Transition Assistance Program includes a pathway to aid retiring members of the reserve components.
- Improves financial planning training under the Transition Assistance Program.
- Authorizes a new pilot program to expand career training, resume building, and networking for retiring servicemembers.
- Improves the SkillBridge program to expand the number of private sector apprenticeships available to retiring servicemembers.



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