



November 25, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
U.S. House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell; Minority Leader Schumer; Speaker Pelosi; and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The Military Coalition (TMC), which represents more than 5.5 million current and former uniformed service members, veterans, their families and survivors, is writing to support S. 2981, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps Amendments Act of 2020. The Coalition has maintained a strategic goal to support all eight uniformed services by ensuring federal statutes apply equally wherever possible. Even though members of the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps often put themselves in harm's way and are subject to the same deployment requirements as members of the armed forces, NOAA lacks some of the statutory authority to grow, maintain, and manage personnel — specifically their Officer Corps.

This important legislation addresses those authorities and benefits not granted to the Corps, whose officers consist of experts in varying fields, including but not limited to oceanography, meteorology, engineering, earth sciences, and fisheries science. The highly specialized level of expertise in these fields make NOAA unique and invaluable to the U.S. as contributors to National Security, state and national economics, and weather forecasting. However, currently NOAA Corps do not receive employment preference for title 5, or certain employment rights under title 38. Additionally, the lack of an obligated service requirement damages the service's ability to retain trained and experienced personnel. Expanding post-service employment opportunities and implementing service requirements ensures a return on investment for the Federal government by continuing to employ trained experts in scientific and research fields.

The bill includes several other important provisions such as: increasing the limit on authorized officers from 321 to 500; allowing the flexibility to address emerging needs and meet current obligations as liaisons to the other services; an education loan repayment program and a student pre-commissioning program; and expanded recruiting incentives and opportunities to grow a more diverse force.

During the last 35-day government shutdown, NOAA exemplified dedication to service by continuing operations without compensation. TMC recommends the legislation include a provision to ensure payment in the event of a lapse in appropriations.

Expanding the authorities and benefits to the NOAA Corps would allow its personnel to fill critical gaps in areas of gathering and monitoring environmental information for the Department of Defense; illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and marine debris. Further, their dedication to their mission makes tangible contributions to national security in the Arctic and maritime security writ large.

TMC, as represented by those organizations listed on the attached, appreciates your leadership on this important issue and urges you to support passage of these statutory authorizations this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack Du Teil". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jack Du Teil
President
The Military Coalition

Cc: Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Cantwell, Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop, Senator Sullivan, Representative Case.

See attached list of organizations

Air Force Association (AFA)
Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)
Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA)
Association of Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS)
Association of the United States Navy (AUSN)
Blinded Veterans Association (BVA)
Coast Guard (CWOA)
Public Health Service, Inc. (COA)
Fleet Reserve Association (FRA)
Gold Star Wives of America (GSW)
Iraq Afghanistan Veterans Association (IAVA)
Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America (JWV)
Marine Corps League (MCL)
Marine Corps Reserve Association (MCRA)
Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America (MCA)
Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)
National Military Family Association (NMFA)
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association (NERA)
Non – Commissioned Officers Association (NCOA)
Reserve Officers Association (ROA)
Service Women's Action Network (SWAN)
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)
The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA)
United States Army Warrant Officers Association (USAWOA)
USCG Chief Petty Officers Association (CPOA)
VetsFirst