

Sen. Baldwin: Votes for National Defense Authorization Act

Posted on Tuesday, Sep 19, 2017

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin released the following statement on her vote for the FY18 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA):

“Today, I will vote in favor of this defense authorization legislation because it makes important investments to strengthen our national security and support the health and wellbeing of our servicemembers and their families. In particular, I am pleased the bill authorizes a pay raise for our troops, supports Made in Wisconsin programs like Oshkosh Defense’s Joint Light Tactical Vehicle, and includes \$13 million for the construction of new facilities at Wisconsin’s Fort McCoy Army base. Additionally, the NDAA includes my bipartisan legislation—the Veterans ACCESS Act—to prevent bad doctors from treating our veterans in community care programs like VA Choice.

“However, I strongly object to the bill’s elimination of critical Buy American standards. I fought against this misguided policy with my pro-Buy American amendment that was also supported by the Trump Administration. Unfortunately, my amendment didn’t get a vote so there is more work to do to ensure that when our military uses taxpayer dollars it is buying highest-quality Made in America products. I will continue to fight for this Buy American policy as the NDAA moves to the House-Senate conference committee.

“I am also disappointed that the NDAA restricts the Made in Wisconsin Littoral Combat Ship program. While I’m pleased that the bill included my bipartisan amendment to add \$600 million for a second LCS to the bill’s original level of one, that’s still one ship short of the ideal number of three LCS, which maintains

workforce levels at the shipyards and throughout the supply chain. But as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I know that the NDAA is only one piece of the puzzle when it comes to the LCS. I will continue my fight in that committee to ensure that the FY18 defense funding bill fully supports this program, which is so critical to our national security and our Wisconsin economy.”

Background

Supporting America’s Defense Workers Act: Senator Baldwin’s Buy America amendment would have reversed Section 863, which is currently in the NDAA. President Trump shares the goal of striking that section, stating in the White House’s Statement of Administration Policy, “The Administration strongly objects to section 863... The existing procurement requirements act as a key guarantor of strategic supply chain security. They protect DOD’s ability to reliably source goods such as chemical weapons antidotes and components for naval vessels, among others.”

Current law requires that certain critical components—like valves, machine tools, anchor chain, propellers and chemical weapons antidotes—be supplied by companies qualified under the National Technology and Industrial Base (NTIB). Section 863 enacts a harmful sunset provision on these current requirements, eliminating them at the end of Fiscal Year 2018 and consequently opening taxpayer-funded defense contracts to unfairly-subsidized foreign competition, placing American jobs at risk.

Fighting for our Made in Wisconsin Littoral Combat Ship program: The version of the NDAA passed by the Senate Armed Services Committee authorized funding for only one Littoral Combat Ship. Originally, the administration requested only one LCS in Fiscal Year 2018; however, this spring, after Senator Baldwin wrote to President Trump and questioned the Navy at a Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee hearing, the administration submitted an amended budget request that included two Littoral Combat Ships. To follow through on this positive momentum, Senator Baldwin worked across the aisle with Senator Luther Strange (R-AL) to successfully include an amendment to the NDAA that added \$600 million for a second LCS, matching the final Trump budget request. However, because the Marinette Marine shipyard and the skilled Wisconsin supply chain are optimized for three LCS per year, Senator Baldwin will continue her work in the Appropriations Committee to include three ships in the defense funding bill. Last year, Senator Baldwin secured funding for three LCS.

Preventing bad doctors from treating our veterans: Currently, a loose patchwork of VA regulations are intended to stop fired or suspended VA providers from participating in VA-administered community care programs. However, VA's continued lack of consistent implementation of national standards at the local level demonstrates that Congress must act and not leave veterans' health and safety to chance. Senator Baldwin's Veterans ACCESS Act would require the VA Secretary to deny or revoke the eligibility of a healthcare provider to participate in community programs if that provider was removed from employment with VA, violated his or her medical license, had a Department certification revoked, or broke the law.

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