November 03, 2026

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman, House Armed Services Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member, House Armed Services Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Rogers and Wicker and Ranking Members Smith and Reed:

As you finalize the FY 2027 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the undersigned organizations urge you to retain the House-passed provision incorporating H.R. 8732, the Pensions for Retired Uniformed Servicemembers Act, adopted through Amendment #46. This bipartisan legislation would ensure retired members of all eight uniformed services receive their earned retired pay without interruption during a lapse in appropriations.

Federal law recognizes the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Commissioned Officer Corps as uniformed services. Their officers deploy in support of national and public health emergencies, and they earn retirement and health benefits through dedicated service to the nation. Yet they remain the only uniformed service retirees whose earned retired pay is vulnerable to interruption during a government shutdown.

During the October 2025 shutdown, USPHS and NOAA retirees and survivors eligible for the Survivor Benefit Plan experienced delays in two scheduled retirement payments. Although they received the full amounts owed as back pay after the shutdown ended, the interruption left them without income they relied on to meet their financial obligations.

Their retired pay depends on annual appropriations to the departments of Health and Human Services and Commerce. In contrast, armed forces retirees, including Coast Guard retirees, continued receiving timely payments through the Military Retirement Fund (MRF), which remains available during government shutdowns.

Receiving back pay does not eliminate the financial uncertainty caused by payment delays. All uniformed service retirees deserve the same assurance that the retirement benefits they earned will arrive on time, regardless of a lapse in appropriations.

The Pensions for Retired Uniformed Servicemembers Act would correct this inequity by moving USPHS and NOAA retirement obligations into the MRF, which already pays armed forces retirement benefits. The legislation does not create a new benefit, increase retired pay, or expand eligibility. It ensures consistent, uninterrupted payment of an existing obligation, and would do so without increasing federal spending: The departments of Health and Human Services and Commerce would continue to fund their retirement obligations through annual actuarial

contributions to the MRF, consistent with the approach used by the departments of Defense and Homeland Security. The legislation only changes how existing benefits are funded and paid.

Congress established a precedent in the FY 2021 NDAA by moving Coast Guard retirement obligations into the MRF to protect retirees from payment interruptions during government shutdowns. This legislation extends that proven solution to uniformed USPHS and NOAA retirees.

No retired member of the uniformed services should have to wonder whether a government funding lapse will delay the pay earned through decades of service. We appreciate the inclusion of the Pensions for Retired Uniformed Servicemembers Act provision in the House-passed NDAA, and respectfully urge you to retain the provision in the final FY 2027 NDAA and close this long-standing gap in protection for uniformed service retirees.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Organizations:

Association of the United States Navy
Blue Star Families
Commissioned Officers Association of the USPHS
Fleet Reserve Association
Gold Star Spouses of America
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A.
Marine Corps Reserve Association
Military Family Advisory Network
Military Officers Association of America
National Defense Committee
National Military Family Association
Navy League
Reserve Organization of America
Service Women's Action Network
Tragedy Assistance Program For Survivors
United States Army Warrant Officers Association
Vietnam Veterans of America
With Honor Action

CC:

The Honorable John Thune, Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Chuck Schumer, Senate Democratic Leader
The Honorable Mike Johnson, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries, House Democratic Leader

Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
House Committee on Natural Resources