

Military One Source Update ► Now Available For A Full Year after Separation

The Department of Defense announced it will extend eligibility for Military OneSource benefits from the current 180 days to 365 days after separation or retirement from military service to ensure all service members and families have access to comprehensive support as they transition to civilian life. This change goes into effect today in accordance with the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2019. Military OneSource provides information, resources and support for active-duty, National Guard and reserve service members, their families and survivors. Provided at no cost, Military OneSource gives exclusive access to programs, tools, and benefits designed to help ensure service members and their families are mission-ready and able to thrive in both their military and post-military lives. Military OneSource services are accessible 24/7, service members and family members can call Military OneSource at 800-342-9647 or go to www.militaryonesource.mil. To explore additional benefits that may be available through the Department of Veterans Affairs, go to <https://explore.va.gov>.

UCMJ Update ► Domestic Violence Added As A Separate Crime

Domestic violence will officially become a separate crime under the Uniform Code of Military Justice when President Donald Trump signs the annual defense authorization act into law next week. Military officials have prosecuted such crimes in the past, but under more general justice categories such as assault. They carry severe penalties including jail time and dismissal from the armed forces. But analysts say that doesn't always convey the seriousness of the offense. The change was included in the massive military policy measure after outside advocates noted the lack of domestic violence as a specific crime under military law has ramifications for how outside law enforcement can keep track of those troops after they leave the ranks.

Those types of convictions in the civilian world can trigger restrictions on future firearms purchases and ease the path to protection from abuse orders. But since military officials don't separate domestic abuse crimes separately from other assaults in their record keeping, reporting those crimes to outside agencies is often incomplete. The issue drew national attention a year ago, when former airman Devin Kelley gunned down 26 people at a Texas church. Kelly was kicked out of the military after being convicted of assaulting his wife and child, but civilian authorities were not properly notified of the crimes that would have disqualified him from buying firearms. In the months that followed, military officials added more than 4,000 former service members to the list of individuals ineligible for gun purchases because of crimes while serving.

In a statement, Rep. Jackie Rosen (D-NV) and one of the sponsors of the amendment, said the change will "close a dangerous loophole" facing military families. The authorization bill also includes language expanding the eligibility of victims' counsel in domestic violence cases and changes to how information on those crimes are recorded throughout the military. Additionally, it requires defense leaders to standardize policies for safely transferring victims of domestic violence or sexual assault away from accused troops. Trump is expected to sign the legislation into law 13 AUG at an event including military members at Fort Drum in New York.

NDAA 2019 ► President Signs Bill into Law

President Donald J. Trump today signed the \$717 billion Fiscal 2019 National Defense Authorization Act at a ceremony at Fort Drum, New York. The act – named for Arizona Sen. John S. McCain – authorizes a 2.6 percent military pay raise and increases the active duty forces by 15,600 service members. "With

this new authorization, we will increase the size and strength of our military by adding thousands of new recruits to active duty, Reserve and National Guard units, including 4,000 new active duty soldiers,” Trump told members of the Army’s 10th Mountain Division and their families. “And we will replace aging tanks, aging planes and ships with the most advanced and lethal technology ever developed. And hopefully, we’ll be so strong, we’ll never have to use it, but if we ever did, nobody has a chance.”

Services’ End Strength Set

The act sets active duty end strength for the Army at 487,500 in fiscal 2019, which begins Oct. 1, 2018. The Navy’s end strength is set at 335,400, the Marine Corps’ at 186,100 and the Air Force’s at 329,100. On the acquisition side, the act funds 77 F-35 joint strike fighters at \$7.6 billion. It also funds F-35 spares, modifications and depot repair capability. The budget also fully funds development of the B-21 bomber. The act authorizes \$24.1 billion for shipbuilding to fully fund 13 new battle force ships and accelerate funding for several future ships. This includes three Arleigh Burke-class destroyers and two Virginia-class submarines. There is also \$1.6 billion for three littoral combat ships. In addition, the act authorizes 24 F/A-18 Super Hornets, 10 P-8A Poseidons, two KC-130J Hercules, 25 AH-1Z Cobras, seven MV-22/CMV-22B Ospreys and three MQ-4 Tritons.

Afghanistan, Iraq

There is \$5.2 billion in the budget for the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund, and another \$850 million to train and equip Iraqi security forces to counter Islamic State of Iraq and Syria terrorists. The budget accelerates research on hyperspace technology and defense against hyperspace missiles. It also funds development of artificial intelligence capabilities. “In order to maintain America’s military supremacy, we must always be on the cutting edge,” the president said. “That is why we are also proudly reasserting America’s legacy of leadership in space. Our foreign competitors and adversaries have already begun weaponizing space.” The president said adversaries seek to negate America’s advantage in space, and they have made progress. “We’ll be catching them very shortly,” he added. “They want to jam transmissions, which threaten our battlefield operations and so many other things. We will be so far ahead of them in a very short period of time, your head will spin.”

He said the Chinese military has launched a new military division to oversee its warfighting programs in space. “Just like the air, the land, the sea, space has become a warfighting domain,” Trump said. “It is not enough to merely have an American presence in space; we must have American dominance in space, and that is why just a few days ago, the vice president outlined my administration’s plan to create a sixth branch of the United States military called the United States Space Force.”

The 2019 Authorization Act does not fund the military. Rather, it authorizes the policies under which funding will be set by the appropriations committees and then voted on by Congress. That bill is still under consideration.

NDAA 2019 Part 2 ► Where's The Money To Pay For It?

Now that the FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) has been signed into law, one might be inclined to ask, “Where’s the money to pay for the \$717 billion legislation touted to rebuild and modernize our military force?” Great question. Like most major advocacy efforts these days on Capitol Hill, victory often is clouded by some obstacle, usually having to do with congressional wrangling over

how to prioritize federal spending. The sweeping defense bill made its way through the halls of Congress in record time. In remarks on the Senate floor, Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK), a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, said the last time the annual defense bill made it to the president's desk this early was in 1996. More often than not, though, the bill ends up being a source of contention as it bumps up against other national priorities.

Vet organizations are grateful for Congress's swift and speedy resolve this year to complete the bill ahead of the August recess. While the FY 2019 NDAA is poised to change the course of military readiness and the all-volunteer force for years to come, DoD can't pay for the things Congress authorized without first getting appropriate funding. The legislation to fund the bill is stalled, along with a number of other appropriations bills for now, and not likely to see any movement in the short-term as lawmakers left town to return to their home districts.

The House is expected to be out the full month, and the Senate is taking a mini-recess, returning in mid-August to play catch-up on unfinished business. However, lawmakers left town surrounded by a flurry of mixed messages as to what to expect upon their return, leading to questions about what they actually might be able to accomplish before the midterm elections. Once Congress returns in September, the pressure will intensify as lawmakers have only about nine working days to act on passing a budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

Meanwhile, mixed messages on a government shutdown continue to cause consternation with congressional leadership. Trump has indicated he's considering a government shutdown either before or after the election. The president is keen on pressing hard to get funding for a border wall and immigration reform before the end of the year. In spite of the president's talk of a government shutdown, some headlines, like GOP leaders yawn at Trump's shutdown threats, dismiss the possibility of a shutdown and signal lawmakers' intent to pass a series of spending bills before the midterm elections to prevent a lapse in funding for most of the federal government. So there is a lot of "wait and see" as to what happens next with the defense appropriations bill.