

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 12, 2018

The Honorable James Inhofe
Acting Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Acting Chairman Inhofe and Chairman Thornberry and Ranking Members Reed and Smith:

As you work to reconcile the differences between the Senate- and House-passed versions of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2019, we write to urge you to retain language from Section 629 of the House-passed bill in any final conference report.

The House language represents S. 3201, “The Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018,” that we introduced, which would extend commissary, exchange, and Morale, Welfare and Recreation facility access to new patrons: Purple Heart recipients, Medal of Honor recipients, former prisoners of war, veterans with service-connected disabilities, and their designated caregivers. We offered this proposal as an amendment (#2622) to H.R. 5515 on June 11, 2018, during the Senate’s floor debate of the NDAA.

According to a 2017 Department of Defense review, expanding access to new patron groups promises to ensure long-term, sustainable access to the commissary privilege—consistently ranked as the most important non-cash compensation benefit among service members—while reducing reliance on Congressional appropriations. That is why the proposal has the support of many veteran service organizations, including the American Legion, AMVETS, Association of the U.S. Navy, Disabled American Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Wounded Warrior Project.

Thank you for your consideration of our request to support our military heroes, disabled veterans, and their caregivers, and to strengthen the commissary and exchange systems.

Sincerely,



BRIAN SCHATZ
U.S. Senator



JOHN BOOZMAN
U.S. Senator