

# The Senate NDAA for FY 2025

## THE ISSUE

The current Senate version of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2025 (FY 2025 NDAA) contains critical funding for the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and increased funding for shipbuilding, but it does not adequately address divisive, politicized problems at the Department of Defense (DOD). Most egregiously, the Senate NDAA includes a provision to register women for the draft, a measure that is widely and correctly opposed by the American public, including most American women. The Senate NDAA is therefore a mixed bag that contains many important provisions for U.S. national security but also some very objectionable provisions that most Americans would oppose.

Unlike the House version of the FY 2025 NDAA, which adheres to the defense spending cap in the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA), the Senate version contains an additional \$25 billion in defense spending. To its credit, this increased defense spending is focused on the Indo-Pacific and procurement of the ships, planes, and munitions needed to deter China—but this should be done within the parameters of the FRA, given the United States' perilous fiscal condition.

## THE GOOD:

- The bill reinserts funding for a second *Virginia*-class submarine, supporting the Navy's mission in the Indo-Pacific and reassuring Australia of the viability of the planned future sale of *Virginia*-class submarines as part of AUKUS (the security partnership among Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States).

- The bill fences off funding for the *Constellation*-class frigate program instead of zeroing it out (as the House version did), extending a lifeline to a program that will be critical to the U.S. Indo-Pacific security strategy.
- The bill authorizes increased funding for the procurement of precision-guided munitions.
- The bill increases shipbuilding by buying a third *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyer.
- The bill authorizes funding for the nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM-N).
- The bill contains substantial support to the U.S. mission in the Indo-Pacific, including full funding of the Pacific Deterrence Initiative and authorization for a new Indo-Pacific Security Assistance Initiative.

## THE BAD:

- The bill fails to address the politicized initiatives on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and climate change at the DOD.
- The bill contains insufficient safeguards against Chinese malign foreign influence.
- The bill contains an unfunded coverage mandate for universal in vitro fertilization (IVF) for servicemembers and their dependents, estimated to cost approximately \$1 billion annually. Due to the fixed amount of funding for defense health care programs, this provision would either force reductions in military medical readiness or lead to

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This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <https://report.heritage.org/fs275>

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reimbursement cuts for medical providers who participate in the TRICARE military health care network (under current law and policy, assisted reproductive technology (ART), including IVF, is already provided at no cost to eligible military servicemembers with service-connected illness or injuries).

- The bill lacks key language that was included in the House-passed FY 2024 NDAA that would repeal the Defense Department (DOD) memo illegally allowing special travel and paid leave for elective abortions.

#### THE UGLY:

- The bill mandates that all women between the ages of 18 and 26 register for the military draft.

#### DRAFTING “OUR DAUGHTERS”

The most problematic aspect of the Senate NDAA for FY 2025 is its inclusion of a measure to register American women for the draft. A national survey by Scott Rasmussen shared with The Daily Signal found that most American women oppose including women in the military draft. As Victoria Coates, Heritage Vice President for National Security, has stated:

The Senate defense bill’s provision for mandatory registration of all young women for conscription puts “fairness” over military necessity. It would waste time and resources during a war in order to evaluate and train thousands of draft-age women to find the subset qualified for the requirements of military service. Including women in the selective service is pointless virtue-signaling from those who believe the military should be a social experiment and not a lethal fighting force.

#### FOCUS ON THE INDO-PACIFIC

The Senate NDAA contains a number of critically important provisions to strengthen the U.S. military through procurement of the ships, planes, and munitions needed to deter China in the Indo-Pacific. China is the preeminent

security challenge facing the United States, and lawmakers must align budget with strategy by focusing defense spending on the capabilities and initiatives most relevant to deterring China.

The bill is strongly supportive of the need to strengthen America’s strategic arsenal, which has atrophied and is faced with the challenge posed by China’s rapid nuclear buildup.

The bill fully funds the Pacific Deterrence Initiative and strengthens U.S. defense integration and cooperation with key allies Japan and Australia. It also includes critically important funding for military construction projects in the Indo-Pacific.

#### SHIPBUILDING

As part of its positive efforts to strengthen U.S. deterrence in the Indo-Pacific, the bill supports shipbuilding in several key ways.

The Senate NDAA for FY 2025 authorizes funding for a second submarine and a third *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyer. A bipartisan letter signed by more than a hundred Congressmen argued in favor of two submarines, observing that the planned growth in submarine production is “dependent on the persistent two-per-year demand signal to the nationwide submarine industrial base that Congress has defended since 2011,” a commitment that has “driven suppliers to make critical capital investments and expand capacity based on a predictable forecast in expected work.”

The bill also extends a lifeline to the *Constellation*-class frigate program, for which the House version has zeroed out funding, by fencing FY 2025 funds for *Constellation*-class frigate construction pending DOD certification relating to design completion. This is an important measure that has the potential to make the program successful over the long term by avoiding requirement overload and cost overruns.

#### THE STRATEGIC ARSENAL

The Senate NDAA strongly supports the building of a nuclear arsenal that deters U.S. adversaries and ensures the security of the

United States. It establishes the nuclear armed sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM-N) as a major defense acquisition program, to include \$250 million to develop the missile and another \$70 million to build the warhead. It requires the DOD to understand whether and how U.S. nuclear strategy should change given the Chinese nuclear breakout and, despite some on the Left who have proposed killing America's intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force, requires the Air Force to field an ICBM force that will remain credible for the next half-century. Finally, it calls for development of an integrated, multi-layered missile defense architecture.

The initiatives align with recommendations made in Heritage's July 2024 *Special Report "A Nuclear Posture Review for the Next Administration"* and the 2023 final report of the Congressional Strategic Posture Commission. The Heritage Foundation believes that these are important steps to build on in future NDAAs to continue to strengthen the U.S. deterrent in the coming years.

### NOTABLE PROVISIONS

The following provisions are listed here without comment or evaluation. Some notable provisions according to the Senate Armed Services Committee are:

**Servicemembers.** The bill:

- Authorizes funding to support a 4.5 percent pay raise for military members and a 2 percent pay raise for DOD civilian employees.
- Increases monthly basic pay for junior enlisted servicemembers in the grades of E-1 through E-3 in addition to the force-wide pay raise.
- Amends the Military Selective Service Act to require the registration of women for Selective Service.
- Includes a number of provisions to improve DOD efforts related to traumatic brain injury, including treating, caring for, and researching injuries related to blast overpressure or blast exposure.
- Authorizes servicemembers without dependents who live in military unaccompanied housing to be paid higher Partial Basic Allowance for Housing rates.
- Authorizes increased funding to repair and improve enlisted barracks across the services.
- Establishes the Commission on Quality of Life for the All-Volunteer Armed Force to assess quality of life considerations for the military and civilian workforces.
- Authorizes a one-year extension of certain expiring bonus and special pays.
- Increases the maximum annual skill proficiency bonus to \$55,000.
- Increases the maximum accession bonus for the health professions scholarship and financial assistance program from \$20,000 to \$100,000.

**The Indo-Pacific.** The bill:

- Authorizes an additional \$12.5 billion, designated as emergency spending, for U.S. Navy and Air Force disaster recovery construction projects on Guam in response to Typhoon Mawar.
- Authorizes the full budget request for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) and requires a plan for more effective PDI budgeting in future fiscal years.
- Requires a plan for the establishment of Joint Force headquarters subordinate to U.S. INDOPACOM in Japan and Australia.
- Authorizes an Indo-Pacific Security Assistance Initiative and authorizes the DOD to provide or replenish defense articles and services to allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific.

- Requires DOD engagement with appropriate officials from Japan, Australia, and the Republic of Korea for the purpose of establishing multilateral security assistance initiatives with the military forces of foreign partners throughout the Indo-Pacific region.
- Requires a plan for advancing trilateral security cooperation among the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea.
- Adds Japan and the Republic of Korea to the contested logistics demonstration and prototyping program.

**Southwest Border Security.** The bill:

- Authorizes an additional \$25 million for Joint Task Force North to bolster its mission countering transnational criminal organizations along the Southwest border.
- Authorizes the DOD to support civil authorities to detect, identify, and monitor uncrewed aircraft systems that cross the international land borders of the United States.
- Promotes information sharing among DOD personnel and other federal, state, and local authorities deployed to the Southwest border.
- Requires the DOD to prioritize requests for support at the Southwest border that are timely and that define the required capabilities of support.
- Authorizes the DOD to enter into services contracts in support of U.S. Customs and Border Protection tasked with securing the Southwest border.
- Extends congressional oversight of Southwest border security.

**Countering China.** The bill:

- Requires a report on the military cooperation

between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation and the implications of such cooperation for U.S. national security.

- Requires a transregional strategy to expose malign activities by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA).
- Requires each geographic combatant command to designate a lead component for coordinating transregional efforts to counter malign PLA activities.

**The Strategic Arsenal.** The bill:

- Establishes a program element and program office for the SLCM-N.
- Authorizes \$252 million to support continued Navy development of the SLCM-N.
- Authorizes modification or development of the B61-13 gravity bomb and a variation of the W80 weapon for the SLCM-N.
- Requires a plan for acquiring and deploying no fewer than 450 Sentinel ICBMs.
- Requires a DOD plan for deterring and defeating simultaneous aggression by two near-peer nuclear competitors, including requirements for nuclear force sizing.
- Requires the development of a national integrated air and missile defense architecture.
- Requires an assessment of the recommendations in the final report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States.

**The Army.** The bill:

- Supports the Army's priority modernization efforts, to include long-range fires, future vertical lift, next-generation combat vehicles, and air and missile defense.

- Authorizes increased funding for procurement of enduring combat aircraft, armored fighting vehicles, munitions, long-range fires, and short-range fires.
- Directs a briefing on the feasibility of land-basing the contents of Army Prepositioned Stocks (APS-3) in a partner nation.
- Authorizes increased funding for the UH-72A Lakota life cycle and directs a report on the Army's strategy for long-term life cycle sustainment and modernization of the Lakota fleet.

**The Navy.** The bill:

- Clarifies the definition of basic and functional design, requires a written determination that detail design will be completed for each block of a ship's construction before beginning construction of that block, and requires a report on the status of vendor-furnished and government-furnished information.
- Authorizes an additional \$1.43 billion for a third guided-missile *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyer.
- Authorizes increased funding to enhance the submarine industrial base and to support the construction of a second *Virginia*-class submarine in FY 2025.
- Fences off FY 2025 funds for *Constellation*-class frigate construction pending DOD certification relating to design completion.
- Authorizes a block buy contract for up to 37 CH-53K airframes and a multiyear procurement contract for CH-53K engines.
- Requires the Navy to conduct a competitive demonstration of extra-large uncrewed underwater vehicles (UUV), including non-developmental items from commercial or foreign partner sources.

- Authorizes increased funding for the testing of additional autonomous surface and UUV dual-modality vehicles.
- Authorizes reduced funding for the E-2D Hawkeye aircraft as production line shut-down funding is unnecessary.

**The Air Force.** The bill:

- Authorizes increased funding for procurement of combat aircraft and munitions.
- Approves the Air Force request to retire 56 A-10s, 65 F-15C/Ds, and 11 F-16C/Ds.
- Disapproves the Air Force proposal to retire 26 F-15E and 32 F-22 aircraft.
- Requires the Air Force to maintain 16 E-3 aircraft until the E-3 can be replaced by E-7 Wedgetail aircraft or until the retirement of the E-3 would create no lapse in Air Force capabilities.
- Authorizes increased funding to procure an additional five HH-60W Combat Rescue Helicopters.

**The Space Force.** The bill:

- Authorizes the DOD to identify poorly performing contractors and require approval for additional contracts.
- Authorizes the designation of a Program Executive Office for space-based air and ground moving target indication.
- Directs a review of DOD efforts to acquire new moving target indicator capabilities and related programs.
- Authorizes the establishment of a Commercial Augmentation Space Reserve Fleet and requires a report on commercial insurance for DOD space support services.