

December 8, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jim Inhofe
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services
205 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairman Reed, and Ranking Member Inhofe:

The SmarterSafer Coalition (SmarterSafer) is a diverse coalition of conservation and environmental groups, taxpayer-focused organizations, insurance and reinsurance interests, and housing advocates. We write to express our priorities around the finalization of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and urge you to retain provisions that advance climate resiliency. As we begin to see the irreversible effects of climate change, climate resiliency is essential to maintain military readiness within the U.S. Department of the Defense (DOD).

DOD owns and operates domestic and international installations valued at \$1.3 trillion.¹ In its 2015 National Security Implications of Climate-Related Risks and a Changing Climate report, DOD indicated that “[a] changing climate increases the risk of instability and conflict overseas, and has implications for DOD on operations, personnel, installations, and the stability, development, and human security of other nations” and that “[m]easures will also likely be required to protect military installations, both in the United States and abroad...”.² In a 2019 report³, DOD noted that many military installations were experiencing constant flooding, drought, and wildfires which impacts DOD’s missions and strategic priorities.

Both Secretary Austin and Deputy Secretary Hicks have expressed concern about climate change. Deputy Secretary Hicks stressed the climate change will increase the number of civil wars, terrorism, geopolitical tension and admitted that “the [DOD] will need to incorporate climate change into threat assessments and update modeling and simulations to reflect climate change.”⁴ Secretary Austin also stated that climate change is disrupting competitive advantages

¹ <https://www.gao.gov/highrisk/dod-support-infrastructure-management>

² <https://archive.defense.gov/pubs/150724-congressional-report-on-national-implications-of-climate-change.pdf?source=govdelivery>

³ https://partner-mco-archive.s3.amazonaws.com/client_files/1547826612.pdf

⁴ <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2630037/climate-change-resiliency-a-high-dod-priority-deputy-defense-secretary-says/>

across the world,⁵ creating dynamic and unprecedented security threats for the U.S. These scenarios add to the pressing urgency to understand the nexus between climate change and military preparedness to ultimately overcome it.

Extreme weather events are instruments acting as catalysts for contemporary conflicts and should not be ignored as domestic and international security threats. Additionally, these events pose tremendous risk to U.S. taxpayers. As the Senate begins to contemplate the final action on NDAA, SmarterSafer urges you to uphold the climate resiliency measures carefully crafted with bipartisan support in the House of Representatives. SmarterSafer supports efforts to require the use of funds to include weather resistant infrastructure and to incorporate climate risk into the decision-making process. Climate adaptation and resiliency is the future of effective military strategy. Additionally, we support the consideration of other amendments that promote climate resiliency, adaptation, mitigation and recommend that those subjects are seriously considered and debated before the final passage of the NDAA. SmarterSafer believes that these provisions will improve the durability of American military bases as well as will uphold the U.S.'s position as the global leader in military power.

Thoughtful defense spending can and should simultaneously create and protect the environment and uphold U.S. national security. As Congress begins the final negotiations of the NDAA, we hope that you will continue to focus your time and effort on these topics and appreciate your consideration of the aforementioned suggestions and continue to promote a fiscally and environmentally conscience DOD. As always, our coalition stands ready to be a resource to you and your colleagues as you pursue these ideas.

Respectfully,

SmarterSafer Coalition

⁵ <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2817727/secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iiis-statement-on-the-dod-climate-risk-anal/>

MEMBERS

Environmental Organizations

American Rivers
Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES) ConservAmerica
Defenders of Wildlife
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) Surfrider Foundation

Consumer and Taxpayer Advocates

Coalition to Reduce Spending National Taxpayers Union
R Street Institute Taxpayers for Common Sense Taxpayers Protection Alliance

Insurer and Reinsurer Interests

Association of Bermuda Insurers and Reinsurers (ABIR) The Chubb Corporation
Liberty Mutual Group
National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies (NAMIC) National Flood Association
Reinsurance Association of America
Swiss Re
USAA

Mitigation Interests

Natural Hazard Mitigation Association
Housing
Habitat for Humanity National Housing Conference National Leased Housing Association

ALLIED ORGANIZATIONS

Allianz of America
American Consumer Institute
American Property Casualty Insurance Association (APCIA) Center for Clean Air Policy
Friends of the Earth
Institute for Liberty
Zurich Insurance