

# **Floor Remarks for Conference Report to H.R. 1735**

**Chairman Heck**

**1 October 2015**

I thank the Chairman for yielding. As Chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel, I appreciate Chairman Thornberry's efforts to bring this conference report to the floor. His dedication to our Armed Forces, their families, and our veterans is commendable.

Supporting the men and women who volunteer to pick up a weapon, stand a post, and guard the freedoms and liberties that make our nation great is a primary function of the federal government - "to provide for the common defense."

Today, with the adoption of this conference report, we achieve that goal.

Included in the report are personnel provisions that will allow us to recruit and retain the best and brightest, maintain an agile military force,

and ensure our brave men and women in uniform are given the benefits they have earned and deserve.

The President has threatened to veto this conference report, even though the report authorizes the amount he requested in his budget, because he is not happy with the manner in which it is provided. He is holding the military hostage in order to get increases in non-defense spending. I understand that he has urged some of my colleagues to vote no today. I want to make sure my colleagues know some of what they would be voting against:

A new retirement plan that provides options and portable retirement benefits for individuals who serve less than twenty years, roughly 83% of the force;

A pay raise for our military men and women along with many special pays and bonuses that are critical to maintaining the all-volunteer force;

A joint uniform drug formulary between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs so that transitioning service

members can continue to receive the medications that are working for them as they leave active service; and

Enhanced protections for sexual assault victims, to include expanding access to special victims counsel, protecting victims from retaliation, and improving the military rules of evidence.

If the President follows through with his veto threat, service members and their families will be deprived of these significant improvements to their compensation and quality of life.

The military personnel provisions in the Fiscal Year 2016 Defense Authorization Act resulted from a bipartisan process. I want to thank the subcommittee's Ranking Member, Congresswoman Susan Davis, the subcommittee members, and staff for their contributions and support.

I urge my colleagues to stand with our military men and women, and their families and support this report.

I yield the balance of my time.