

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

November 23, 2020

The Honorable Jim Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
205 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Inhofe and Smith, Ranking Members Reed and Thornberry, and Conferees:

As you begin conference negotiations on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we write to you today concerning the challenges faced by local media and actions the Department of Defense (DOD) can take that will help ensure these important businesses are able to continue to operate throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and, at the same time, educate Americans across the country about the military services.

Right now, the need for reliable news and information is as important as ever. Our radio and television broadcasters and newspapers provide local and national news, emergency alerts, educational programs, and more to all corners of the United States – information that can and often does have security implications.

News publishers and local broadcasters have continued to provide crucial information throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, keeping individuals and families connected to their communities and their country, and providing critical public health information. And yet, few industries have been harder hit financially than local media due a steep decline in advertising revenue from local businesses. In many markets, the loss of advertising revenue from local businesses has exceeded 30 percent, and in some cases more than 50 percent compared to this time last year. Unfortunately, many of these local media organizations have not been able to receive assistance from the federal government that will help extend the runway during the COVID-19 crisis. Without assistance, the long-term financial stability of local journalism in the U.S. is at risk.

As members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, we strongly believe that local newspapers and broadcasters play an integral role during the COVID-19 pandemic and

for our national security moving forward. In addition, newspapers and broadcasters are effective, efficient and trusted media platforms for delivering advertising to local audiences through their print, digital and broadcast platforms. Research shows that these local media outlets reach opinion leaders in communities who are likely to influence others, which could be valuable for military branch recruiting campaigns.

We were pleased with bipartisan language included in both bills encouraging each of the branches of the military to use local media sources when recruiting for the Department of Defense. Out of the roughly \$1 billion that is spent by the federal government on advertising and other marketing, the DOD is responsible for nearly two-thirds of these expenditures. While the language in the House and Senate bills differ slightly, the House language definitively underscores the sense of Congress on the importance of this issue. That is why we are calling on the conferees to accede to the House-passed language below:

It is the sense of Congress that the Chiefs of the Armed Forces, in coordination with the Recruiting Commands of the Armed Forces, should give all due consideration to the use of local broadcasting and traditional news publishers when advertising.¹

We commend you on your leadership and commitment to our country and our Service members, and we thank you for your consideration of this request as you begin conference negotiations on the FY21 NDAA.

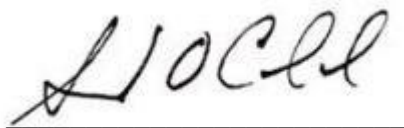
Sincerely,



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Bradley Byrne
Member of Congress

¹ Sec. 595 – Sense of Congress Regarding Advertising Recruiting Efforts, Subtitle J—Miscellaneous Reports And Other Matters, Title V – Military Personnel Policy, H.R. 6395, William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, July 21, 2020.