



The Coalition to Save our Military Shopping Benefits

September 15, 2017

The Honorable Tim Kaine
United States Senate
231 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kaine:

As the Coalition representing the millions of military patrons and beneficiaries of exchange and commissary programs, we urge you to reject the Kennedy Amendment #718, which calls for a report on the management of military commissaries and exchanges and a two billion dollar reduction.

We strongly believe this amendment is unnecessary and disruptive as the Department of Defense (DoD) is still implementing language included in the Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to transform the management of commissaries. DoD and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) have already reported to Congress on the state of these transformation initiatives. DoD needs time to absorb the legislative authorities and implement any sensible changes to these benefits before another wave of reductions and changes are proposed.

Thirty-nine military and veterans organizations supported important legislation introduced in the House, which would put in place needed protections to safeguard these valuable earned benefits for service members and their families. The Military Patron Protection Act (MPPA) of 2017 (H.R. 2850), advanced by Representatives Walter Jones and Tim Walz is designed to give patrons a voice in the management of these programs. We strongly suggest including similar language in the Senate Bill as an alternative to the Kennedy Amendment.

Military patrons have invested billions of dollars from their own pockets for financing exchange and commissary construction programs, along with hundreds of millions of dollars annually to support on-base morale, welfare, and recreation programs. The MPPA would provide patrons with transparency and a much needed voice in the sourcing and application of this funding, how these benefits are structured going forward that effect their investments, and how patron financial contributions to these programs are being allocated. This legislation would also provide needed visibility for impacts on associated small and disadvantaged businesses, and a wide range of benevolent causes that are enabled through patronage of these programs.

On behalf of the millions of service members, Guard and reserve, veterans, survivors, and military family members who rely on these critical benefits, we respectfully urge rejection of the Kennedy Amendment #718 and your consideration of this legislation during your deliberations of the Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act.

Sincerely,

The Coalition to Save Our Military Shopping Benefits

Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)

American Logistics Association (ALA)

American Military Partner Association (AMPA)

American Military Retirees Association (AMRA)

American Military Society (AMS)

AMVETS (American Veterans)

Armed Forces Marketing Council (AFMC)

Association of the United States Navy (AUSN)

Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS)

Fleet Reserve Association (FRA)

Jewish War Veterans of the USA (JWV)

Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)

Military Partners and Families Coalition (MPFC)

National Industries for the Blind (NIB)

Society of Military Widows (SMW)

The Flag and General Officers Network (TFGON)

The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA)

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

United States Army Warrants Officers Association (USAWOA)

The Coalition to Save Our Military Shopping Benefits – Over 2.3 Million Strong – is working to ensure service members (Active Duty, Veterans, National Guard and Reserve), their families and survivors have a voice in shaping policies that impact our nation's ability to sustain healthy and vibrant commissary and exchange systems, and to protect these critical earned benefits. Our members are among the largest, oldest, and most trusted military and veterans service organizations in the country.

The Coalition to Save Our Military Shopping Benefits
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