



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

July 26, 2016

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen McCain and Thornberry and Ranking Members Reed and Smith:

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) are writing to express our concern with provisions contained within both the U.S. House and U.S. Senate versions of the fiscal year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would weaken important nondiscrimination and affirmative hiring provisions intended for people with disabilities and veterans, including those with service-connected disabilities.

CCD is a coalition of national consumer, advocacy, provider, and professional organizations working together with, and on behalf of, the 57 million children and adults with disabilities and their families living in the United States. CCD advocates for national public policy that ensures full equality, self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities, including veterans who have served our nation.

Four decades ago, Congress approved landmark legislation that prohibits employers that do business with the federal government from discriminating in employment against protected veterans (Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974) and individuals with disabilities (Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973). In addition, these historic and bipartisan laws require federal contractors that meet a certain contract size threshold to take affirmative action to recruit, hire, promote, and retain these individuals.

CCD strongly supported the recent federal rules implementing VEVRAA and Section 503 and has worked with the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs and the contractor community

to ensure these sensible provisions are understood and followed. We are disappointed to learn about language in both the House and Senate NDAA that would limit federal agencies' ability to learn, as allowed under Executive Order 13673, whether organizations seeking to do business with the federal government are in compliance with employment laws such as VEVRAA and Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Full compliance of VEVRAA and Section 503 are critical in ensuring that all individuals have a fair shot at employment and remain necessary to prevent discrimination in the workplace and during the hiring process. As you work to finalize the FY 2017 NDAA, we ask that you remove any provisions that would weaken employment laws, including VEVRAA and Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Easterseals
Epilepsy Foundation
Goodwill Industries International
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Institute
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Special Needs Alliance
The Arc of the United States
United Spinal Association
VetsFirst
Vietnam Veterans of America