

commissary and exchange for low-cost goods. If the Commission does not recommend a pay increase, all benefits are extremely needed.”

Commissaries are required to operate in remote areas. A lot of these objections are from commissaries in remote areas where people don't have any other place to actually make their purchases.

At a time when thousands of junior servicemembers and their families use food stamps, we should not be making changes that could increase costs at the checkout line.

The commissary benefit encourages people to reenlist, preserving a well-trained, dedicated military. It ensures that training investments are well spent, saving the expense of retraining the majority of the force every few years. The commissary savings and proximity and the consistency of the commissaries also encourage spouses, whose opinions may be a deciding factor in reenlistment decisions.

I know this is true. Just last Friday I was at Altus Air Force Base. I went into the commissary and talked to someone who was reconsidering. It was the wife of a flyer. Right now one of the biggest problems we have in the Air Force is the pilot shortage. They said that would be a major determining factor. So it is the right thing to do.

It also provides jobs for families of servicemen. Sixty percent of the commissary employees are military related. The greatest benefit is that their jobs are transferable. If they are transferred from one place to another, they are already trained and ready to go.

As I said, the Department of Defense delivered their report only yesterday and no one has had a chance to really go over it. The mandated GAO review of this plan is now under way. Of course, it could be up to 120 days after this for the next step to become completed.

The report supports section 661 of the Senate bill regarding optimization of operations consistent with business practices, but it doesn't affect 662. That is the section where we had the pilot program.

We have addressed this before, but the report also acknowledges that privatization would not be able to replicate the range of benefits, the level of savings, and geographic reach provided by DeCA while achieving budget neutrality.

It states that the Department of Defense—and I am talking about the report from the Department of Defense—is continuing its due diligence on privatization by assessing the privatization-involved portions. They are already doing that right now. In fact, some things have already been privatized, such as the delis, the bakeries. They have been privatized already in those areas and that is actually working. So privatizing military commissaries before having a full assessment of the costs and benefits is not the responsible thing to do. We owe that to our members.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the Members who are cosponsors and the organizations that are supporting the Inhofe-Mikulski amendment No. 4204.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

INHOFE-MIKULSKI AMENDMENT #4204

(1) Boozman (R-Ark.), (2) Boxer (D-Calif.), (3) Brown (D-Ohio), (4) Burr (R-N.C.), (5) Capito (R-W.Va.), (6) Cardin (D-Md.), (7) Casey (D-Pa.), (8) Collins (R-Maine), (9) Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), (10) Hatch (R-Utah), (11) Heller (R-Nev.), (12) Hirono (D-Hawaii), (13) Kaine (D-Va.), (14) Klobuchar (D-Minn.), (15) Lankford (R-Okla.), (16) Markey (D-Mass.), (17) Menendez (D-N.J.), (18) Moran (R-Kan.).

(19) Murkowski (R-Alaska), (20) Murray (D-Wash.), (21) Nelson (D-Fla.), (22) Peters (D-Mich.), (23) Rounds (R-S.D.), (24) Rubio (R-Fla.), (25) Schatz (D-Hawaii), (26) Schumer (D-N.Y.), (27) Session (R-Ala.), (28) Shelby (R-Ala.), (29) Stabenow (D-Mich.), (30) Tester (D-Mont.), (31) Tillis (R-N.C.), (32) Udall (D-N.M.), (33) Vitter (R-La.), (34) Warner (D-Va.), (35) Warren (D-Mass.), (36) Whitehouse (D-R.I.).

42 ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING THIS AMENDMENT/OPOSING PRIVATIZATION LANGUAGE IN THE BILL

(1) Air Force Sergeants Association, (2) American Federation of Government Employees, (3) American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations Teamsters, (4) American Logistics Association, (5) American Military Retirees Association, (6) American Military Society, (7) American Retirees Association, (8) American Veterans, (9) Armed Forces Marketing Council, (10) Army and Navy Union, (11) Association of the United States Army, (12) Association of the United States Navy, (13) Fleet Reserve Association, (14) Gold Star Wives of America.

(15) International Brotherhood of Teamsters, (16) Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, (17) Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America, (18) Military Order of Foreign Wars, (19) Military Order of the Purple Heart, (20) National Defense Committee, (21) National Guard Association of the United States, (22) National Military Family Association, (23) National Military and Veterans Alliance, (24) Military Partners and Families Coalition, (25) Military Officers Association of America, (26) National Association for Uniformed Services, (27) Society of Military Widows, (28) The American Military Partner Association, (29) The Coalition to Save Our Military Shopping Benefits, (30) The Flag and General Officers Network.

(31) Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, (32) The Retired Enlisted Association, (33) Uniformed Services Disabled Retirees, (34) United States Army Warrant Officers Association, (35) Veterans of Foreign Wars, (36) Vietnam Veterans of America, (37) Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, (38) National Industries for the Blind, (39) Naval Enlisted Reserve Association, (40) Reserve Officer Association, (41) Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, (42) The American Legion.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I yield back the remainder of my time.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:53 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled

when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

AMENDMENT NO. 4204

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to offer a bipartisan Inhofe-Mikulski amendment to the National Defense Act. What does our amendment do? It stops the privatization of commissaries, which are an earned benefit for our military and their families.

Every year when the Senate debates this bill, we talk about how we love our troops and how we always want to support our military families. But if we really love our troops, we need to make sure our troops have the support they need. One of the earned benefits that does that is the commissaries. And if we love our troops, why would we want to proceed in this direction of privatization? Our troops don't view commissaries as a subsidy; they view them, as do I, as an earned benefit. I am fighting here to preserve this piece of the earned benefit compensation package.

What are the commissaries? Since 1826, military families have been able to shop at a network of stores that provide modestly priced groceries. The commissary system is simple: If you are an Active-Duty, Reserve, National Guard, retired member, or a military family member, you have access to more than 246 commissaries worldwide. They give military members and their families affordability and accessibility to health foods.

Senator INHOFE spoke earlier about where these commissaries are. Some are located in our country, and some in remote areas, and over 40 percent are either in remote areas or overseas.

Last year Senator INHOFE and I stood up for military family benefits to stop privatization. Congress adopted our amendment, but in doing so required a DOD study assessing privatization, which would affect commissaries. We needed to understand how privatization would affect levels of savings, quality of goods, and impact on families. DOD finally gave us the report on June 6, 2016. So they dropped the report on D-day. And guess what. It reaffirms what Senator INHOFE and I have been saying: We should not privatize commissaries without additional study. The report is simple and straightforward: We should not proceed with the privatization or a pilot on privatization until further study.

First, DOD has demonstrated that privatization cannot replicate the savings the current commissary system provides. Second, privatization significantly reduces the benefits available to commissary patrons. And privatization would dramatically reduce the workforce, which is where so many military families work. The DOD cannot move