

FY2024 NDAA: Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) Matters

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Background

The Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) is a [congressionally mandated](#) and funded Department of Defense (DOD) program of instruction with participation of [approximately 500,000 students in more than 3,400 secondary schools](#). It is administered by the military departments (Army, Navy, and Air Force) and instruction is provided primarily by retired military servicemembers. The military services exercise oversight for the program in coordination with local educational agencies (LEAs).

The program has garnered attention in the 117th and 118th Congresses following reporting on [instructor misconduct](#), [curriculum standards](#), and [allegations of coerced enrollment](#), among [other matters](#). While program oversight has raised concerns, a [2023 study by the RAND Corporation of JROTC outcomes](#) has linked high school participation in the program with increased likelihood for graduation, higher attendance rates, and lower disciplinary actions. It also found that JROTC participants are more likely than other high school students to enlist, complete their first term of enlistment, and to pursue science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)-related occupational specialties than other enlistees in the Army. In 2020, the [National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service](#) pointed to JROTC as a catalyst for increasing civic education and sparking interest in military service, and [recommended expanding and strengthening JROTC programs](#). [Some observers](#) have suggested that expanding the JROTC program could help to mitigate recruiting shortfalls by increasing youth [propensity to serve](#).

For additional background, see CRS In Focus IF11313, *Defense Primer: Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps*, by Kristy N. Kamarck.

Legislation

During consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 (NDAA; H.R. 2670; S. 2226), the House and Senate have proposed several amendments to JROTC authorities (see [Table 1](#) and discussion of provisions below).

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Table I. Selected JROTC Provisions in the FY2024 NDAA

House-passed (H.R. 2670)	Senate-passed (S. 2226)
Program Structure	
No similar provision.	Section 571 would mandate at least 3,400 JROTC units and no more than 4,000, and would strike statutory language about “fair and equitable distribution” of units.
Section 553 would prohibit the establishment or maintenance of a JROTC unit at an educational institution owned, operated, or controlled by the Chinese Communist Party.	No similar provision.
Section 552 would clarify eligibility requirements for JROTC instructors and modify how instructor salaries are determined.	Section 574 would clarify eligibility requirements for JROTC instructors and modify how instructor salaries are determined.
Program Accountability	
No similar provision.	Section 572 would codify the authority to suspend or place on probation JROTC units and would require reports to Congress on suspended and probationary units.
No similar provision.	Section 573 would require DOD to establish a standard memorandum of understanding (MOU) for institutions hosting JROTC units with processes for reporting conduct violations.
No similar provision.	Section 575 would require an annual report to Congress on allegations of sexual misconduct in JROTC units.
No similar provision.	Section 576 would require a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on DOD efforts to increase transparency and reporting on sexual violence in JROTC.

Source: CRS analysis of legislation on Congress.gov.

Program Structure

Section 571 of S. 2226 would set mandatory parameters for the number of JROTC units (between 3,400 and 4,000). The military departments reported 3,499 total units in FY2023 (see [Table 2](#)) with a planned increase of 15 units in FY2024. Prior legislation (P.L. 110-417, §548, as amended) encouraged DOD to develop plans for JROTC expansion to 3,700 units and to report to Congress on efforts to “increase distribution of units.” Section 571 would also remove language under [10 U.S.C. §2031\(a\)](#) that mandates “fair and equitable distribution” of units throughout the Nation.

[Section 553](#) of H.R. 2670 would prohibit the establishment or maintenance of a JROTC unit at an educational institution owned, operated, or controlled by an individual or entity with connections to the Chinese Communist Party. [Some observers](#) have raised concerns about China’s influence and [investment](#) in elementary and secondary education in the United States.

Table 2. Number of Funded JROTC Units

Military Service Branch	FY2023	FY2024 (request)
Army	1,729	1,734
Navy	658	658
Marine Corps	254	252

Military Service Branch	FY2023	FY2024 (request)
Air Force	848	853
Space Force	10	17
Total	3,499	3,514

Source: Military Department budget justification books. Navy and Marine Corps figures include [Navy National Defense Cadet Corps \(NNDCC\) units](#).

Similar provisions in the House and Senate bills (Sections 552 and 574, respectively) would clarify [the authority](#) to employ certain non-retirement eligible veterans and reserve component members as JROTC instructors. This follows an expansion of instructor eligibility in the FY2023 NDAA (P.L. 117-263, §512). These provisions would also create a new pay structure for instructors. Military departments subsidize JROTC instructors by reimbursing the host LEA for a portion of the salary. The services fund these subsidies through their military personnel (MILPERS) appropriations (see [Table 3](#)). The [Minimum Instructor Pay \(MIP\)](#) required to be paid by the LEA is the difference between the (1) active duty pay the instructor would receive if recalled to active duty and (2) instructor's retired pay entitlement. The military service is required by [10 U.S.C. §2031\(e\)](#) to reimburse the LEA for up to one-half of the MIP.

Changes to the [military retirement system](#) in the FY2016 NDAA (P.L. 114-92) that reduce the retired pay multiplier (thereby increasing the MIP) would likely increase DOD's costs for instructor salaries. Section 552 of the House bill would require the Secretary of Defense to prescribe a new joint service instructor pay scale (JSIPS) system that could potentially lower DOD's costs, depending on how the pay scale is structured. Both bills would require DOD to subsidize a minimum of one-half of the JSIPS salary while the host LEA would be responsible for the remaining salary. The proposed legislation does not define parameters for the JSIPS, thus providing discretionary authority to DOD to establish such parameters under its [financial management regulations for JROTC instructor pay](#).

Table 3. JROTC Program Funding

Dollars in millions

Military Service	FY2023 Enacted		FY2024 Request	
	O&M	MILPERS	O&M	MILPERS
Army	\$202.501	\$24.660	\$204.895	\$24.660
Navy	\$60.694	\$15.924	\$58.970	\$16.534
Marine Corps	\$33.160	\$3.999	\$29.616	\$4.079
Air Force	\$76.037	\$19.812	\$75.666	\$24.657
Total	\$372.392	\$64.395	\$369.147	\$69.930

Source: CRS Analysis of [Defense Budget Materials](#).

Notes: MILPERS is Military Personnel appropriations and funds instructor salaries, O&M is Operation and Maintenance appropriations and funds uniforms, cadet travel, training aids, text books, educational materials, and other unit operating expenses.

Program Accountability

Several provisions in S. 2226 would seek to improve JROTC oversight and accountability, in particular with respect to sexual misconduct by JROTC instructors. [Section 573](#) would require DOD to establish a standard memorandum of understanding (MOU) for JROTC units and LEAs specifying requirements and processes for reporting allegations of misconduct, certifying instructors, inspecting units, and training

students. [Section 572](#) would codify authorities to suspend or place units on probation for violating the established standards. [Section 575](#) would require annual reporting for a period of five years starting in March 2024 on allegations of sexual misconduct in JROTC units. Information in these reports would be similar to information collected under DOD's [Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program](#). Under [Section 576](#), the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) would be required to report on DOD's implementation of these mandated activities. While these actions could provide greater accountability over JROTC, additional administrative burdens on LEAs could discourage participation in the program.

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