

Commentary

Durbin: Statement on Senate passage of NDAA

Legislation includes a number of Durbin-led measures & authorizations for military construction projects in Illinois

U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), a member of the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, released the following statement on Dec. 15,



Durbin

2022, after voting for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which includes authorization of nearly \$858 billion for national defense, including authorizations for military construction projects in Illinois and a 4.6 percent pay raise for service members and the Department of Defense (DoD) civilian workforce:

“The Senate’s passage of the NDAA shows that members on both sides of the aisle are committed to a strong national defense and to the protection of our women and men in uniform. I’m particularly pleased to see significant investments in Illinois and our seasoned service members.

“While I am disappointed the COVID-19 vaccine mandate to protect our service members was rescinded in the final text, there are many important provisions in this legislation—including funding to help our Ukrainian allies fight back against Putin’s unjust war and

modernize our military installations, as well as funding to study the impacts of PFAS contamination on military bases and expand mental health services.”

Durbin-led measures included in the FY23 NDAA are:

- **Military Construction Projects in Illinois.** The bill includes an authorization of \$52 million to support military housing at Scott Air Force Base in St. Clair County, Ill.; an authorization of \$3.5 million in planning and design funds for a new Army Guard Readiness Center in Chicago; and an authorization of \$2.5 million in planning and design funds for a new hangar for the Illinois Air National Guard.

- **Military Aircraft.** The bill prohibits the divestment of C-40 aircraft, which would have impacted Scott Air Force Base. The legislation also authorizes funding for eight F-18/E/F aircraft for the Navy, produced by Boeing in St. Louis, Missouri, and includes a provision supporting the increased use of safe and cost-effective used parts to maintain Air Force and Navy Aircraft, which will help Illinois-based companies that provide aviation services like AAR Corp in Wood Dale, Ill.

- **Mental Health Services.** The bill includes Durbin’s Post-Disaster Mental Health Response Act, which will expand federal funding available for mental health services after FEMA emergency declarations.

- **Ukraine.** The bill includes the prohibition of U.S. government funding for Ukrainian annexation, derived from Durbin’s amendment, in light of

Russia’s illegal ongoing war in Ukraine. It also authorizes \$800 million for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, and an authorization for \$2.7 billion for Army munition production and capacity expansion amid challenges faced by the defense industrial base, including to meet demand in support of Ukraine.

- **PFAS.** The bill includes a number of provisions addressing PFAS, including \$20 million for continued Centers for Disease Control’s (CDC) study of the human health impacts of PFAS in drinking water, funding for remediation, and reporting requirements on PFAS contamination at military bases.

- **Electric Vehicles.** The bill requires the DoD to consider the economic feasibility of electrical vehicles (EVs) as part of the Department’s non-tactical vehicle fleet modernization effort, develops plans to manage and dispose of batteries from EVs, and creates a pilot to assess the grid impacts of using such EVs.

- **Provision that authorizes a pilot program to improve military tactical vehicle safety.**

- **Provision in support of the Baltic Security Initiative.**

- Secured along with Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), a **provision that broadens the Basic Needs Allowance to address military hunger to support service members.**

- **Provision imposing sanctions and other restrictions on Burma, following the systematic human rights abuses on the Rohingya people and the February 2021 coup by the military**

regime. The provision is derived from the *Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act*, which Durbin co-sponsored.

- **Provision condemning the detention of Russian opposition leader Vladimir Kara-Murza.**

- **Establishes an office within the DoD to serve as the focal point for matters related to civilian casualties and other forms of civilian harm resulting from military operations involving United States Armed Forces.**

As Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Durbin helped secure a number of provisions that were in the jurisdiction of the Committee. These provisions include:

- **Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act of 2021:** The bill includes Durbin’s and Senators Robert Menendez’s (D-NJ) and Cory Booker’s (D-NJ) legislation that would protect judges’ sensitive personal information from being sold by commercial data brokers online, limit the posting of judges’ personal information on government websites, and set up a process overseen by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts to enable judges to request that other websites remove sensitive personal information when there is no legitimate public interest to publish such information.

- **Sexual Assault Survivors Bill of Rights:** The bill also includes bipartisan legislation that creates an incentive to States to adopt a bill of rights for sexual assault survivors similar to provisions in federal law.

POINT/COUNTERPOINT: Should American business move toward a four-day workweek?

EDITOR’S NOTE: The Illinois Business Journal has gathered reactions to the debate over shifting to a four-day workweek, which until recently has been largely a topic overseas but is gaining momentum in the United States.

Sirsha Haldar, general manager of ADP. “Now more than ever, firms are looking for ways to attract and retain the best talent. Research suggests that moving to a four-day workweek could be the answer. Debates over the length of the workweek are nothing new. Prior to the 1920s, six days weeks were the norm. It wasn’t until 1926 and The Ford Motor Co. that the Monday-to-Friday pattern took hold. An even shorter workweek is being hailed as the future of employee productivity.” *As posted in elitebusiness, an international entrepreneur publication.*

Sid Upadhyay, CEO and co-founder of online recruitment service, WizeHire: “I think ultimately the largest challenge about this for business especially, is the profit and loss, how can we make it work with our existing cost base and existing cost structures across various industries.” *As printed in HRD, an international publication dedicated to human resources.*

Bryan Citrin, Chiropractic Advertising: “Some businesses need people available seven days a week while others just the standard five. I work in a business that needs people every day answering phones for inbound calls for clients and managing paid media around the clock. Switching to a four-day workweek would

mean having to hire additional people to take care of the additional workload. Our business wouldn’t benefit from having more hours per day condensed into fewer days per week. Every business is different, though, and each entrepreneur needs to determine what works best for their business model and clients.” *As printed in Forbes Magazine.*

Adam Aron, CEO of AMC Theaters: “It may be time for America to formally adjust to a four-day workweek, instead of five. Good for AMC, too, if every weekend is three days long.” *From Twitter; in a poll to his 2.75 million followers.*

From Human Resources Director, an industry publication, on a 32-hour workweek bill proposed in February in California for companies with more than 500 employees: “The proposal would see the hourly overtime rate of one and a half times the amount of work rate charged to after 32 hours a week instead of after 40 hours a week. The primary purpose of the bill is to increase employees’ quality of life, stabilize the employment stability post-COVID-19 pandemic, as well as raise the wage and pay.

“The bill has been shelved for the year due to low support and failure to meet committee deadlines for consideration. Many opposing the bill claim it was a bid to increase the minimum wage, exempt union businesses, and add a strain on business operations.

“If enacted, the bill would prohibit employers from cutting down an em-

ployee’s regular rate of pay despite the shortened workweek. In effect, the labor costs of companies will significantly increase, which could discourage companies from adopting the work schedule arrangement, especially while they try to recover from the losses they incurred during the pandemic. The increased labor costs can also affect other aspects of the company, such as their ability to hire or create new positions and opportunities for their employees, and even lead to unnecessary layoffs due to financial restraints.

The California Chamber of Commerce refuses to support the bill that would expose employers to litigation under the Private Attorneys General Act due to the impossible overtime pay requirement after 32 hours of work and the increased labor costs.”

John Crea, St. Paul, Minn., in a letter to the Pioneer Press: “Good neighbors make strong communities, and strong communities make solid citizens.

“Let’s consider a very straightforward way to give us all more time to be neighborly. We should reduce the legal standard for a full-time job from 40 to 32 hours, and the workweek from five days to four. And we should do this with no cut to the workers’ paychecks. Economists will tell us this is feasible, thanks to huge productivity gains already realized from automation and forthcoming thanks to the commercial application of artificial intelligence. More importantly, educators, psychologists and medical professionals will all affirm the social benefits of an

extra day of leisure each week to spend with family, friends and neighbors.”

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, director of the University of Oxford’s Wellbeing Research Centre, writing for Positive News on one of the largest four-day week trials to date: “A group of companies that have been trialing a four-day working week have reported increased revenue, with fewer employees taking time off or resigning. While it’s easy to understand the effects of a shorter week on worker wellbeing, the positive effects on company earnings and productivity may be more of a surprise – but new research backs this up.

“The firms were participating in a trial organized by non-profit 4 Day Week Global. The trial, which involved 33 companies and nearly 1,000 employees in countries including the U.S., Ireland and Australia, saw no loss of pay for employees – organizations paid 100 percent of their salaries for 80 percent of their time. But employees also pledged to put in 100 percent of their usual effort over the shorter working week.

“Participating firms reported increased revenue, plus reduced absenteeism and resignations. Workers said they felt less stressed and reported higher rates of life satisfaction. No firms said they would go back to the five-day week.

“Iceland trialed reduced working hours between 2015 and 2019 that included hospitals, schools and social service workers. The country considered it an “overwhelming success” and reduced hours – without a reduction in pay – has since been rolled out to 86 percent of Iceland’s workforce.

(EDITOR’S NOTE: The opinions expressed in this publication on its Commentary pages are those of their authors. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of the Illinois Business Journal or its corporate family.)