Military Advocate Weekly Update

January 5, 2020

Well, after taking some time off over the Christmas and New Year’s holidays I am back with another edition of my weekly column. I certainly enjoyed visiting with family and traveling to Nashville, TN to see some new sites and attend the wedding of a friend.

As I do almost every week, this column is intended to update you on defense and military issues affecting Missouri and I strive to keep you informed about what I did during the past week(s) and my work plan for the week ahead. Speaking of the week ahead, we are putting some final touches on plans for the Missouri Military Appreciation Day on February 5, 2020. Over the next few days I will have some exciting news about distinguished visitors from the Pentagon we have invited, as well as Missouri’s leaders who will be attending.

Because of the holidays, I do not have much to report regarding my travels, but there were some developments shortly before Christmas that are good news for Missouri.

Defense Appropriation and National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2020

As I detailed in my December 15 column, Congress had a high hurdle to jump just before Christmas in passing both a FY 2020 Defense Appropriation and the NDAA before a December 20 continuing resolution deadline. The good news is that not only did both measures pass on December 19 and were signed into law by the President, Missouri’s military and defense industry interests fared very well. Missouri Senator Roy Blunt, who is a senior member on the Senate Appropriations Committee, took a leading role in making sure that Missouri priorities were included in the military defense and construction funding. A particular concern had been that construction on the new NGA campus in St. Louis and a new hospital at Fort Leonard Wood could be slowed without adequate and timely funding.

Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler (MO-4th), played a key role in ensuring that Missouri priorities were included in the NDAA. She is the Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee’s Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee and a member of the Conference Committee that wrote the final version of the bill. In a news release, Hartzler said, “The primary responsibility of Congress is to ensure
our men and women in uniform have the resources they need as they selflessly serve our nation. Whiteman Air Force Base, Fort Leonard Wood, and the state of Missouri play a vital role in our national defense and I am proud this bill will provide them with adequate resources to deter our adversaries.”

Missouri’s military and defense interests are also well served by Senator Josh Hawley, who is a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and who specifically championed Missouri priorities in the NDAA; and Congressman Sam Graves (MO-6th), who is a member of the House Armed Services Committee and who also championed Missouri priorities, and especially advocated for Rosecrans Air National Guard Base and a pay raise for military personnel.

Visit at the US Army Corps of Engineers, Engineering Research and Development Center (ERDC)

I was pleased to represent our state in discussions with senior Army leaders from ERDC at Vicksburg, MS on December 17. The ERDC houses an amazing set of internationally recognized experts—engineers, scientists, physicists, mathematicians, technicians and support personnel—in seven laboratories and multiple field sites. ERDC works to solve problems and develop solutions in civil and military engineering, geospatial sciences, water resources, and environmental sciences for the Army, Department of Defense, civilian agencies, and the nation.

I visited ERDC along with Beth Chancellor, University of Missouri’s Vice President for Information Technology & MU Chief Information Officer, and Dr. K. Palaniappan, a senior researcher from the MU College of Engineering. We were there to discuss how we could work in a coordinated fashion with ERDC to bring new funding opportunities for Missouri-based research, and to ensure that additional military R&D can be carried out in conjunction with Fort Leonard Wood and the NGA-St. Louis.

Missouri University of Science and Technology (Missouri S&T)

On December 19 I had the great pleasure of visiting with Dr. Mo Dehghani, Chancellor of Missouri S&T in Rolla and a number of his senior leadership team. I was accompanied by Dorsey Newcomb, Executive Director of the Leonard Wood Institute and Sustainable Ozarks Partnership at Fort Leonard Wood. Mr. Newcomb and I discussed Chancellor Dehghani’s vision of creating an Army-centric research center at Missouri S&T. The Chancellor’s vision is compelling and the university’s expertise in areas of importance to the Army are very important. Since the meeting I have discussed the initiative with Missouri leaders in the administration and in the legislature, and hope support will be forthcoming.
Week ahead

The main focus of my week ahead is in putting final plans into place for the Military Appreciation Day on February 5. We expect to get formal invitations out to community and industry leaders and firm up our agenda for speakers and events during that day.

Until next time, I welcome your feedback on the work I am doing on behalf of our military and defense sector.