

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 16, 2018

The Honorable John McCain  
Chairman  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. Senate  
228 Russell Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry  
Chairman  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 25015

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. Senate  
228 Russell Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 25015

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

As witnessed in the tragedy at Sutherland Springs, domestic violence is an indicator of serious danger both to military families and the broader community. As you prepare to finalize the conference agreement on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, we are concerned about the limited avenues for servicemembers and their families suffering from domestic violence, harassment, stalking, or sexual assault to obtain a military protective order. We encourage conferees to adopt Section 544 of the Senate version, which authorizes military judges and magistrates to issue and enforce military protective orders for domestic violence, stalking and sexual assault while providing offenders with due process procedures of notice and a right to be heard.

We believe such complex and dangerous situations need careful accountability at every level. Currently, only commanders can issue military protective orders with no similar authority granted to military judges or magistrates. Section 544 grants servicemembers and military families the right to petition someone outside of their chain of command for protection – a neutral, trained legal professional. It also unlocks a legal framework for alleged offenders to undergo due process. As an additional mode of protection, this provision maintains the authority of military commanders to issue ‘no contact orders’ to address safety concerns and for the good order and discipline of their unit. Finally, this provision ensures that protective orders issued by the Armed Forces meet the requirements for reporting to FBI databases to monitor and prevent firearm purchases as dictated by the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act – compliance that could have prevented the Sutherland Springs massacre.

Protective orders are a commonplace and lifesaving legal mechanism for civilians in all fifty states, yet are constrained within military jurisdiction. Our servicemembers and their families should be able to access the same protections as their civilian counterparts while on active duty. Although expanding access to military protective orders won't halt every instance of stalking or assault, the enforceable legal procedures for police and military personnel will save lives.

Thank you for your consideration of our request to include Section 544 of the Senate version in the final conference agreement for the FY2019 NDAA. These measures are critical steps toward greater protection of military members, their families, and the public.

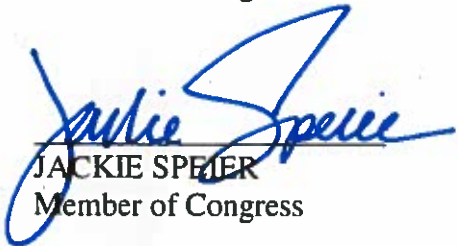
Sincerely,



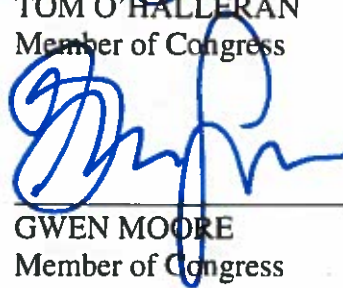
DEBBIE DINGELL  
Member of Congress



TOM O'HALLERAN  
Member of Congress



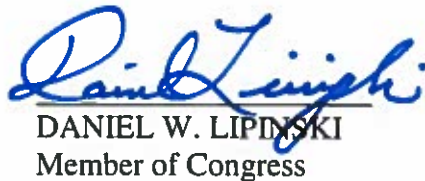
JACKIE SPEIER  
Member of Congress



GWEN MOORE  
Member of Congress



JULIA BROWNLEY  
Member of Congress



DANIEL W. LIPINSKI  
Member of Congress



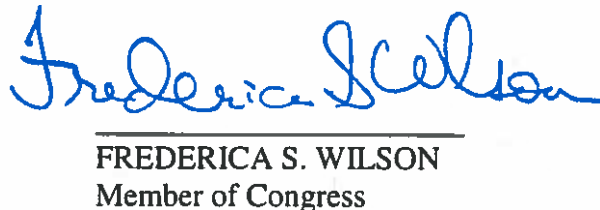
BILL FOSTER  
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FREDERICA S. WILSON  
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ALMA ADAMS  
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ANN MCLANE KUSTER  
Member of Congress



JUAN VARGAS  
Member of Congress