

An Open Letter to AZ's US Senators Kyrsten Sinema and Mark Kelly

Dear [Senator Sinema](#) and [Senator Kelly](#),

On behalf of Arizona's defense coalitions, we applaud you both for your efforts to help secure enactment of the Fiscal Year 2022 [National Defense Authorization Act \(NDAA\)](#). The NDAA provides \$768 billion in military installations and defense community funding. Arizona is proud to have two Senators dedicated to not only the US defense community and industry but also the priorities of Arizona's defense industrial base.

The nation, has, of course, faced many challenges over the last two years. For Capitol Hill, this has unfortunately meant continuing to deviate from Regular Order on key legislation, including Senate consideration of the NDAA, which included no Floor amendments and no real conference.

With this letter, we voice our hope and eagerness that, on the NDAA and other key legislation, Congress will return to a regular state of direct, continuous engagement with all relevant stakeholders, a full and open amendment process supporting Floor consideration, and the convening of a proper conference—all key to ensuring fulsome participation by all those who would be affected by such legislation.

On behalf of the Arizona Defense Coalitions founded by Senator McCain—the Yuma 50, Mesa Industry and Defense Council (MIDC), and West Valley Defense Alliance (WVDA)—we salute you on your continuing support for the Arizona defense industrial base and look forward to growing our partnerships on future defense policy still to come.

How the NDAA Benefits Arizona and all of America

Arizona is home to a dynamic military community consisting of over 17,900 active duty and 14,700 reserve Marines, Airmen, and soldiers spread over seven bases. The NDAA allows America to invest in a robust national defense strategy by providing a \$25 billion increase in defense spending above President Biden's original budget request, including a 2.7% pay raise for our troops. This increase in defense spending will significantly benefit the bases in Arizona.

The legislation secured the authorization for four military construction projects in the state— the South Wilmot Gate at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, two F-35 facility projects at Luke Air Force Base in Maricopa County, and housing and training projects at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Yuma. This investment in infrastructure will allow our warfighters to have the best resources available, enabling them to be mission-ready.

One of the most significant wins for Arizona is the procurement of military jet aircraft at our bases. The authorized increase of nearly \$400 million for an initially slated retirement A-10 program at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, the largest contingent of A-10's in the country. Additionally, the procurement of 85 F-35 aircraft for the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps and increased funding to support aspects of the services' Unfunded Priority Lists would accelerate

and bolster F-35 maintenance activities and mitigate unaffordable sustainment costs. F-35's are flown at Luke Air Force Base, the premier fighter pilot training center for the Air Force, and expect to house six F-35 squadrons eventually. This funding allows Arizona to continue to be an aviation hub for years to come.

Advancing Arizona's Defense R&D

Arizona is also home to a large defense community, which will benefit significantly from several provisions included in the NDAA. For example, Senator Kelly helped advance \$250 million in provisions for research and development that require the Department of Defense to establish a network to support microchip research, testing, and workforce development in coordination with industry and universities. This program, developed by Arizona State University researchers, leverages existing universities' resources to research and test next-generation microelectronics technologies.

The NDAA boosts manufacturing in Arizona through supporting the Army's Improved Turbine Engine Program, developed in Mesa; a \$494 million investment in AH-64s manufactured in Mesa; and \$138 million for Tomahawk Missiles, manufactured in Tucson.

Lasting Impact on our Military Communities

The work of Senators Sinema and Kelly will have a lasting impact on the Arizona military and defense communities and the greater national landscape through your legislation, included in the NDAA. [The Brandon Act](#), sponsored by Senator Kelly, increases suicide prevention mechanisms for the military. Designed to protect servicemembers who experience mental health emergencies, the Act provides immediate and confidential mental health care.

Senator Sinema's [Servicemember Safety and Security Act](#) will help ensure better coordination and communication between the military and law enforcement in the event of missing service members. At the same time, the [Alexander Lofgren Veterans In Parks \(VIP\) Act](#) allows service members, veterans, and Gold Star families to access National Parks and federal lands for free.

On behalf of Arizona's defense community, we thank you both greatly for your unwavering support in ensuring our warfighters have the equipment and resources necessary to keep our nation safe.

Sincerely,

Lynndy Smith, *chairwoman , and co-founder of Arizona's West Valley Defense Alliance and a senior leader at cyber protection firm Acronis SCS.*

Sally Harrison, *president and CEO of the Mesa Industry and Defense Council and Mesa Chamber of Commerce.*

Julie Engel, *president and CEO of Yuma 50 and the Greater Yuma Economic Development Corporation.*