



The Capitol in Washington on Sept. 25, 2019. (Samira Bouaou/The Epoch Times)

Lawmakers Reach Deal on Defense Bill, Establishing US Space Force

By Bowen Xiao - December 10, 2019

Lawmakers reached an agreement on Dec. 9 for a compromise version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that includes \$738 billion for the Department of Defense to set national defense policy—as well as the authorization of the U.S. Space Force.

Leaders of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees said in a summary of the conference report (pdf) released on the same day that the proposed fiscal 2020 NDAA “implements a National Defense Strategy to confront Russia, China, and other threats around the world,” while also reforming and modernizing the systems within the Pentagon.

The proposed bill officially establishes the U.S. Space Force as the sixth armed service of the United States. The Space Force was one of the most high-profile requests by President Donald Trump, who directed the Pentagon to begin the process of creating the force in 2018.

“The FY20 NDAA recognizes space as a warfighting domain and establishes the U.S. Space Force in Title 10 as the sixth Armed Service of the United States, under the U.S. Air Force,” the summary report stated. “In doing so, the NDAA provides the Secretary of the Air Force with the authority to transfer Air Force personnel to the newly established Space Force.”

The agreement also includes for the first time 12 weeks of paid parental leave for federal workers, something Democrats strongly sought, and a 3.1 percent pay increase for U.S. troops—the largest in a decade. The bill is expected to pass before Congress leaves Washington later this month for the year-end holiday break.

“This conference report is the product of months of hard-fought, but always civil and ultimately productive, negotiations,” the leaders of the committee said in a statement.

John Boyd, principal of The Boyd Co., a location and management counsel firm that has been active in the aerospace industry, told The Epoch Times the NDAA agreement is “historic” and showed that “national security and economic benefits” of a space force “rose above the gridlock of partisan politics.”

“Information, or the lack of it, is vital to our national security and economic way of life. Virtually all segments of our nation’s defense system, as well as our nation’s consumer economy assets, rely on satellites in space,” he said. “The Space Force will be a catalyst for innovation and job creation in aerospace, avionics, and IT.”

Boyd said his firm’s aerospace clients are watching the evolution of the Space Force closely. The firm’s clients include Boeing, Pratt and Whitney, Safran Landing Systems, and the Aerospace Industry Association. Boyd called the agreement “a huge win for President Trump and for the national defense of our country.”

“The headquarters of the new Space Force is yet to be determined and will be a highly coveted economic development project—and a platform for leading aerospace and IT states like Florida, Texas, Alabama, and the Carolinas to promote themselves,” Boyd said.

A number of new space-related government positions were also created under the agreement. One such position, the chief of space operations (CSO) for the U.S. Space Force, “will report directly to the Secretary of the Air Force and become a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.” In the first year, the CSO may also serve as the commander of the U.S. Space Command—a combatant command that was created as a precursor to the Space Force.

The CSO will provide “updates to the committees of jurisdiction every 60 days, with briefings and reports on implementation and establishment status.”

A Senate-confirmed assistant secretary of the Air Force for space acquisition and integration was also created by the agreement and would serve as the “senior space architect.”

In addition, an assistant secretary of defense for space policy role was created that would serve “as the senior civilian in the Office of the Secretary of Defense for oversight of space warfighting.”

White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham said in a Dec. 10 statement that the NDAA provides many of Trump’s top priorities, and the establishment of the U.S. Space Force fulfills the “President’s promise to maintain America’s leadership in space.”

“We hope Congress will send this legislation to the President’s desk for his signature,” Grisham said.

The legislation includes \$658.4 billion for the Department of Defense and Department of Energy national security programs, \$71.5 billion to pay for ongoing foreign wars, known as “Overseas Contingency Operations” funding, and \$5.3 billion in emergency funding for repairs of damage from extreme weather and natural disasters.

Reuters contributed to this report.