

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 18, 2026

The Honorable Roger F. Wicker
Chair
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chair
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, Chair Rogers, and Ranking Member Smith,

We write with concern about the ability of our service members to repair their own equipment quickly and securely, and the impact that restricting the “right to repair” has on our military’s readiness, our service members’ skills in a contested logistics environment, and growing maintenance costs that are borne by taxpayers.

As members of the Armed Services Committee, we have examined these risks and raised concerns about current contracting restrictions that leave our service members and the Department of Defense (DoD) with maintenance and repair restrictions. We have questioned multiple committee witnesses and experts on this matter. The Chief of Naval Operations said that right to repair is “**how we make sure we’re ready to fight.**”¹ The Commandant of the Marine Corps said that right to repair is “**a critical investment in our long-term readiness and operational effectiveness,**” creating “**a strategic advantage that pays dividends in terms of cost savings, improved readiness, and enhanced warfighting capabilities.**”² When asked about the impact of data rights restrictions on the force, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force said “**[d]ata rights limitations cause significant delays to depot maintenance production (including aircraft modifications), negatively impacting aircraft availability, increasing sustainment costs, and hindering overall combat readiness.**”³ The Chairman of the Joint

¹ Senator Elizabeth Warren, “ICYMI: At Hearing, Nominee for Head of Naval Operations Says He’s ‘Fully Committed’ to Right to Repair, Testifies Contractor Restrictions are ‘Dangerous’ and Hurt Military ‘Self-Sufficiency,’” press release, July 25, 2025, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/icymi-at-hearing-nominee-for-head-of-naval-operations-says-hes-fully-committed-to-right-to-repair-testifies-contractor-restrictions-are-dangerous-and-hurt-military-self-sufficiency>.

² Response from Commandant of the Marines Nominee General Christopher Mahoney to Questions for the Record from U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, September 16, 2025, [on file with the Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren].

³ Response from Air Force Chief of Staff Nominee Kenneth S. Wilsbach to Questions for the Record from U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, October 21, 2025, [on file with the Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren].

Chiefs of Staff confirmed that **“giving service members access to all the training, technical data, and tooling necessary to repair and sustain our weapon systems would make a positive impact on overall readiness of the Joint Force.”**⁴

This letter provides additional detail on the information we have received from military officials and national security analysts in conjunction with Armed Services Committee hearings and other matters, and the extent to which these officials recognize the need to enhance the military’s right to repair its own equipment. Each of these leaders and many more have acknowledged the threat that these contract restrictions have on the military’s readiness and the need to adopt the bipartisan *Warrior Right to Repair Act* in this year’s National Defense Authorization Act.

Repair Restrictions Hurt Readiness and Increase Costs

The Government Accountability Office first reported on this matter in 2021 and found that enhanced right to repair for the military **“could save billions of dollars.”**⁵ Restricting the right to repair increases costs and hurts readiness across the services, and the vice chiefs for all of the services testified that they support enhancing the military’s right to repair.⁶ Due to contract restrictions, the “Navy had to spend thousands of dollars to fly in a contractor” to make simple repairs,⁷ the Marines in Japan had to wait months for repairs on “engines [that] were packed up and shipped back to contractors in the United States for repairs,”⁸ and the Air Force had to pay \$900 a page for upgrades to contractor-supplied maintenance manuals.⁹ Reducing these restrictions can significantly enhance readiness and reduce costs. For example, when the Army was able to 3D print a safety clip themselves, they went from paying \$20 and waiting months to having the piece in less than an hour for 16 cents.¹⁰ A review by the Defense Innovation Board recommended the Department ensure it is “not beholden to single-solution sustainment providers that inhibit warfighting capacity or mission readiness.”¹¹ The Government Accountability Office recently testified that these restrictions also create vendor lock, which created problems “in the F-35, littoral combat ship, Stryker, the Virginia-class submarine, among others.”¹²

⁴ Response from Joint Chiefs of Staff Nominee Lieutenant General Dan Caine to Questions for the Record from U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, April 3, 2025, [on file with the Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren].

⁵ Government Accountability Office, “Defense Acquisitions: DoD Should Take Additional Actions to Improve How It Approaches Intellectual Property,” November 30, 2021, p. 1, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-104752.pdf>.

⁶ CQ Congressional Transcripts, “House Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness Holds Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2027 Military Readiness,” April 15, 2026, <https://plus.cq.com/doc/congressionaltranscripts-8442027?3>.

⁷ ProPublica, “The Inside Story of How the Navy Spent Billions on the ‘Little Crappy Ship,’” Joaquin Sapien, September 7, 2023, <https://www.propublica.org/article/how-navy-spent-billions-littoral-combat-ship>.

⁸ New York Times, “Here’s One Reason the U.S. Military Can’t Fix Its Own Equipment,” Elle Ekman, November 20, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/20/opinion/military-right-to-repair.html>.

⁹ RAND, “Data Rights Relevant to Weapon Systems in Air Force Special Operations Command,” September 2, 2021, p. 76, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR4298.html.

¹⁰ SIGNAL, “Using Innovative Technology to Boost Production,” Evan Lynch, October 15, 2024, <https://www.afcea.org/signal-media/using-innovative-technology-boost-production>.

¹¹ Defense Innovation Board, “Lowering Barriers to Innovation,” March 2024, pp. 9-10, https://stib.cto.mil/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/2024-3_DIB_Study_Lowering_Barriers_to_Innovation.pdf.

¹² Senate Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Readiness, “To Receive Testimony on the Current Readiness of the Joint Force,” March 4, 2026, pp. 59-60, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/sub-transcript_3-4-2026.pdf.

As experts in intellectual property law have noted, the *Warrior Right to Repair Act* is “consistent with longstanding law and presents no conflict with manufacturers’ IP rights” and merely requires DoD “as market participants, to negotiate favorable terms that will save American taxpayer dollars and ensure the effectiveness and safety of the equipment relied upon by U.S. servicemembers.”¹³

Military Leaders Inform Congress of Risks of Failing to Address Gaps in the Military’s Right to Repair its Own Equipment

As members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, we have asked military leaders about threats posed by restrictions on the military repairing their own equipment. The responses are summarized below.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

On April 3, 2025, in response to questions for the record on right to repair following his confirmation hearing, the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dan Caine, informed us that:

[G]iving service members access to all the training, technical data, and tooling necessary to repair and sustain our weapon systems would make a positive impact on overall readiness of the Joint Force.

[G]ranting service members access to technical data rights for repairing its own equipment could significantly reduce repair and sustainment costs. By enabling the DOD to perform repairs in-house, it would **decrease reliance on external contractors, lower service fees, and allow for more efficient maintenance practices, ultimately leading to long-term cost savings.**¹⁴

Commander of United States Indo-Pacific Command

On July 7, 2025, in response to questions for the record, the Commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Admiral Samuel Paparo, stated that:

USINDOPACOM needs immediate access to technical data rights for equipment repair in forward locations to maintain combat readiness and operational tempo in a contested environment. Waiting for proprietary repair authorizations creates unacceptable vulnerabilities and degrades our ability to sustain operations against a peer competitor when our forces are distributed across the Indo-Pacific.

[R]estricted access to technical data for legacy aircraft components forced reliance on a single manufacturer for repairs. This led to extended lead times and repair costs that were often several

¹³ Letter from Aaron Perzanowski, Jason M. Schultz, Joshua D. Sarnoff, et. al. to Senator Roger Wicker, Senator Jack Reed, Representative Mike Rogers, and Representative Adam Smith, July 22, 2025, p. 1, <https://pirg.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Professors-military-repair-letter-final-2.pdf>.

¹⁴ Response from Joint Chiefs of Staff Nominee Lieutenant General Dan Caine to Questions for the Record from U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, April 3, 2025, [on file with the Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren] (emphasis added).

times the original purchase price, **increasing the overall lifecycle cost of maintaining these systems by an estimated 30-50%.**

USINDOPACOM and our joint partners, including USTRANSCOM and the Defense Logistics Agency, focus on planning for contested logistics environments. Through this planning and analysis, we have identified technical data rights as a requirement. Access to technical data enables domestic manufacturing and repair, supports rapid innovation and/or additive manufacturing, enhances readiness, and creates resilience and the ability to adapt in contested settings.¹⁵

Navy

On July 24, 2025, the now-Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Daryl Caudle, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that right to repair is **“how we make sure that we are ready to fight.”**¹⁶ In full, he responded to questions for the record, stating:

It is so vital. It is so ridiculous that sailors cannot actually enter a piece of equipment because of a contractual reason, a warranty violation. It goes right to the heart of what we call self-sufficiency. So, I don’t like it in peacetime, and I certainly do not want it in wartime. **It is not sustainable. It is dangerous.**

There should be nothing on board a ship that a sailor cannot repair. It is just said that simply. And that is how we make sure we are ready to fight. Things break all the time on our ships, and to keep them going and sustained—and that’s why this is not just a wartime. I mean, it is dangerous we operate now, even in peace. They are not there just sailing around. We are actually acting as a deterrent. We’re a vital part of that, at the ready. So when a piece of equipment is down and our readiness is not 100 percent, and it is because I cannot repair it, then **that’s unacceptable** in my mind.¹⁷

Marine Corps

In September 2025, the Vice Commandant of the Marines, General Christopher Mahoney, shared how right to repair is key to the success of the Marine Corps. He stated that:

The Marine Corps fully supports initiatives that speed maintenance and procuring of spare parts. Additive manufacturing, 3D printing, and the owning of technical data rights for its platforms play a key role in accelerating this process. To ensure Marines can effectively repair equipment, the program office must, **from the very beginning of the procurement process, clearly**

¹⁵ Response from Indo-Pacific Command General Samuel Paparo to Questions for the Record from U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, July 7, 2025, [on file with the Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren]

¹⁶ Senate Armed Services Committee, “To Consider the Nomination of Admiral Daryl L. Caudle, USN, For Reappointment to the Grade of Admiral and to be Chief of Naval Operations,” July 24, 2025, p. 68, <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/7242025nominationtranscript.pdf> (emphasis added).

¹⁷ Senate Armed Services Committee, “To Consider the Nomination of Admiral Daryl L. Caudle, USN, For Reappointment to the Grade of Admiral and to be Chief of Naval Operations,” July 24, 2025, pp. 66-68, <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/7242025nominationtranscript.pdf> (emphasis added).

identify and prioritize the need for organic repair capabilities when defining the requirements.

In short, right-to-repair and technical data rights clauses are not just about saving money; they are about empowering our service to be more self-sufficient, resilient, and adaptable. They are a **critical investment in our long-term readiness and operational effectiveness**. This is a strategic advantage that pays dividends in terms of cost savings, improved readiness, and enhanced warfighting capabilities.¹⁸

Air Force

In May 2025, Senator Warren questioned then-Air Force Chief of Staff General David W. Allvin about whether acquiring technical data rights benefits the Air Force. He stated that:

Acquiring technical data rights generally does provide the Air Force with significantly more flexibility to meaningfully make organic vs. inorganic sustainment choices and inject increased competition into future contracts. **The choice to use DoD assets or contractor logistics services is better enabled**, which can facilitate greater choice in force design and operational reliability, if the ability to modify or repair equipment without needing the original manufacturer's permission is obtained. Additionally, **competition is the foundation of innovation**, and having **clear government purposes or unlimited rights to data** allows the Air Force to potentially compete for future sustainment and modernization work for either hardware or software, potentially lowering costs and avoiding vendor lock-in.¹⁹

In October 2025, General Kenneth S. Wilsbach, then the nominee to be the Air Force Chief of Staff, agreed with Senator Reed that “the military **should have the intellectual property for every system it employs**, going forward, so that soldiers, airmen, sailors, [and] space guardians can fix the equipment in the fields.”²⁰ He went on to state in response to questions for the record:

The value of acquiring technical data has been recognized across the Air Force and the identification, assertion, and enduring tracking of technical data has been more readily resourced to achieve constant improvement. The ability to repair our own equipment is an important part of increasing readiness in many weapon systems.

Data rights limitations cause significant delays to depot maintenance production (including aircraft modifications), negatively impacting aircraft availability, increasing sustainment costs, and hindering overall combat readiness.²¹

¹⁸ Response from Commandant of the Marines Nominee General Christopher Mahoney to Questions for the Record from U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, September 16, 2025, [on file with the Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren] (emphasis added).

¹⁹ Response from Air Force Chief of Staff General David Allvin to Questions for the Record from U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, August 29, 2025, [on file with the Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren] (emphasis added).

²⁰ Senate Armed Services Committee, “To Consider the Nomination of General Kenneth S. Wilsbach, USAF, for Reappointment to the grade of General and to be Chief of Staff of the Air Force,” October 9, 2025, pp. 18-19, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/transcript_10-09-2025_nom.pdf (emphasis added).

²¹ Response from Air Force Chief of Staff Nominee General Kenneth S. Wilsbach to Questions for the Record from U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, October 21, 2025, [on file with the Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren]

Army

In its Army Transformation Initiative, the Army singled out right to repair as an important component of achieving President Trump’s mission.²² In response to questions, then-vice chief of staff of the Army General James J. Mingus in June 2025 stated that

[E]nsuring that Servicemembers have access to the necessary technical data and license rights to repair equipment is **crucial for advancing the Army’s sustainment and readiness**. Having the necessary technical data and license rights allows for timely and efficient maintenance and repairs, reducing downtime and dependency on external contractors. This capability enhances operational readiness by ensuring that equipment is in optimal condition and can be quickly returned to service when needed.²³

U.S. Pacific Fleet Command

In October 2025, the Commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet Command, Admiral Stephen Koehler, who operates where there is a high risk of a contested logistics undercutting the ability to support the warfighter during a conflict, said sailors “must also have the confidence and authority” to install new parts without waiting on contractors. He continued:

Our sailors must have the ability to now only fix their own gear, but retain ownership over their own resilience and combat readiness. For example, if an unmanned system needs to be reconfigured during the fight, our sailors need to do it all. **We owe our warriors the right to repair** and configure their own equipment.²⁴

Conclusion

Military leaders understand that the consequences of DoD’s inability to acquire the right to repair its own equipment have far-reaching implications for our military’s readiness, the defense industrial base, and the waste of taxpayer dollars. By enabling the Department to focus on sustainment and obtain access to the needed technical data, Congress could help DoD save billions of dollars and reduce situations where DoD is beholden to a single contractor.²⁵

(emphasis added).

²² Secretary of Defense, “Army Transformation and Acquisition Reform,” April 30, 2025, p. 3, <https://media.defense.gov/2025/May/01/2003702281/-1/-1/1/ARMY-TRANSFORMATION-AND-ACQUISITION-REFORM.PDF>.

²³ Response from Army Vice Chief of Staff General James J. Mingus to Questions for the Record from U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, June 9, 2025, [on file with the Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren] (emphasis added).

²⁴ Defense, One, “PacFleet is rushing to create new capabilities, operating concepts,” Jennifer Hlad, October 30, 2025, <https://www.defenseone.com/technology/2025/10/pacfleet-rushing-create-new-capabilities-operating-concepts/409193> (emphasis added).

²⁵ U.S. Government Accountability Office, “Defense Acquisition: DOD Should Take Additional Actions to Improve How It Approaches Intellectual Property,” November 2021, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-104752.pdf>; U.S. Government Accountability Office, “Protecting Intellectual Property,” <https://www.gao.gov/protecting-intellectual-property>.

Congress must ensure that the Department of Defense has the tools it needs to strengthen readiness, increase competition, and reduce sustainment costs. DoD has been very clear about this need in testimony to Congress. It is more urgent than ever that Congress act decisively to provide DoD with the right to repair.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Tim Sheehy
United States Senator