

Kaine Joins Colleagues In Calling On Dod To Improve Conditions At Military Barracks

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tim Kaine, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), joined U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and U.S. Representatives Jimmy Panetta (D-CA-19) and Jen Kiggans (R-VA-2) in urging the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) to immediately improve living conditions at military barracks across the country. Many junior-enlisted servicemembers who do not have dependents live in military barracks, particularly after they first join the military. A recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that DOD failed to provide proper oversight and care of the facilities, resulting in thousands of junior servicemembers living in unsafe and unhealthy conditions.

“We write to express our profound concern and disappointment regarding the conditions that thousands of junior enlisted Service members are experiencing in barracks across the country,” wrote the lawmakers. “This is a failure of leadership that cannot be ignored.”

The GAO report found that junior servicemembers were living in rooms with mold, broken windows, and doors that do not lock. Many rooms also lacked air conditioning or heat, access to clean drinking water, and functioning plumbing. In some instances, the GAO report revealed additional serious safety and health concerns, including squatters moving into the living spaces and requirements that servicemembers be responsible for “cleaning biological waste that may remain in a barracks room after a suicide.”

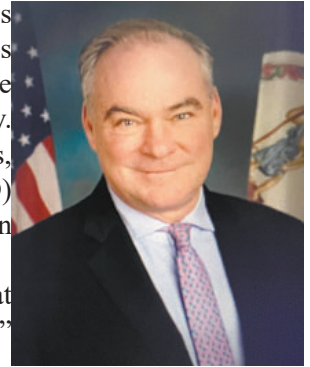
“This is reprehensible, and we expect you to take expeditious and appropriate action to hold those personnel accountable and ensure Service members are receiving the support they might require after that experience,” continued the lawmakers. “It is clear that there are failures at all levels. Across the enterprise, personnel are shirking their responsibilities to provide Service members with safe, habitable living spaces.”

The Members of Congress pressed DOD to swiftly adopt the recommendations of the GAO report and to submit updated DOD habitability guidelines before the Fiscal Year 2025 budget request to ensure improved living standards.

“The people who choose to serve in the enlisted ranks do so selflessly with little expectation of reward. They are the soul of the military and of the Nation, and they deserve better,” wrote the lawmakers. “We trust that you will move decisively to ensure each junior enlisted member of the Armed Forces has a safe, habitable room to return to when the duty day ends.”

Joining Kaine, Blumenthal, Panetta, and Kiggans on the letter are Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Reverend Raphael Warnock (D-GA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), and Bernie Sanders (I-VT), and U.S. Representatives Doug Lamborn (R-CO-5), Nick LaLota (R-NY-1), Robert Wittman (R-VA-1), Elise Stefanik (R-NY-21), Matt Gaetz (R-FL-1), Sara Jacobs (D-CA-51), Derrick Van Orden (R-WI-3), Nancy Mace (R-SC-1), and Mark Alford (R-MO-4).

Kaine has long fought to improve military housing conditions. The Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which Kaine helped pass, included provisions to improve the quality and oversight of military enlisted barracks, including the replacement of substandard barracks, and require that enlisted housing meets the same basic standards as all other military housing. The Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA included Kaine’s “Tenant Bill of Rights,” which requires DOD to establish a “move-out checklist” so that both the tenant and military housing office verify that outstanding maintenance needs are fixed and that the tenant is leaving the home in good condition. In July, Kaine urged the Air Force, Army, Navy, and DOD to implement these privatized housing reforms and tenant protections for servicemembers and their families



**U.S. Senator
Tim Kaine**