



THIS WEEK'S FEATURE

Congress Is Listening. But We Haven't Won Yet.

By Lt Col (Ret.) Ryan Sweazey, LTC (Ret.) Francesca Graham, and Col (Ret.) Tre Del Pizzo

Walk the Talk Foundation — President & Founder | Vice President & COO | Director of Congressional Engagement

We've spent three years documenting the problem. Now Congress must decide whether to address it.

For three years, the Walk the Talk Foundation has done the painstaking, unglamorous work of building an evidence base: one case at a time, one interview at a time, one congressional office at a time. This weekend, as the House and Senate head toward conference on their respective versions of the FY2027 National Defense Authorization Act, we want to be direct with the people who follow this work — staffers, journalists, and those who support this mission — about what these bills get right, what they don't, and what we intend to do about it.

WHAT'S IN THE BILLS — AND WHY IT MATTERS

Both the House (H.R. 8800) and Senate (S. 4784) versions of the FY27 NDAA contain provisions that speak directly to the patterns we have documented across hundreds of client cases and more than a decade of combined advocacy. That is not a coincidence.

The Senate bill's Section 527 is the provision we want to highlight most. It amends 10 U.S.C. § 1034 — the Military Whistleblower Protection Act — to explicitly prohibit two forms of retaliation that have been weaponized against service members for years: retaliatory security clearance reviews and retaliatory psychiatric examinations. These are not edge cases. Our advisors have personally worked cases involving an Air Force lieutenant colonel and an Army chief warrant officer, among others, where these exact tools were deployed against members who did nothing more than report what they saw. We have engaged directly with congressional staff on both of these issues, and seeing them codified in statute is a genuine milestone.

Taken together, these provisions represent the most significant legislative movement on military accountability in several years. We are genuinely encouraged.

WHAT THESE BILLS STILL DON'T DO

We would be doing a disservice to our clients, and to the truth, if we stopped there.

Every provision described above addresses symptoms of a broken system. None of them attacks the root causes. The investigators who conduct administrative investigations are still not required to have any standardized training before they are appointed. The chain-of-command conflicts of interest that allow a service member's own leadership to investigate



complaints against that same leadership remain fully intact. The Inspector General system that our report described as a watchdog turned *Lapdog* is still structurally subordinate to the very institution it is supposed to oversee. And there are still no mandatory timelines for the completion of investigations — meaning a service member can remain in investigative limbo for months or years with no legal recourse.

Our proposed *Military Investigative Competency Enhancement Act* — submitted to congressional defense committees and briefed to professional staff on both sides of the aisle — would address all of these gaps directly: standardized, mandatory training and credentialing for all Inspectors General and command-appointed investigating officers; chain-of-command independence requirements; centralized oversight and audit mechanisms; and mandatory investigation timelines with enforceable consequences for noncompliance. None of that is in either version of the FY27 NDAA.

Treating symptoms without fixing the underlying system only guarantees the problem will return.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Conference begins with the House and Senate carrying different provisions. Several of the Senate's strongest reforms — including the § 1034 modifications in Sec. 527 — are not in the House bill and will need to survive negotiation. We will be working to ensure they do. And we will be making the case, directly and through every channel available to us, that the next step is not another list of prohibited actions. The next step is reforming the system that investigates them.

We have 490+ clients whose stories make the case better than any policy memo. We have case studies that document, in precise and documented detail, what happens when that system fails. And we have a team that will not stop until Congress addresses not just what retaliation looks like, but why it continues to happen unchecked.

We are grateful for the progress reflected in this legislation. We are not satisfied. And we are just getting started.

House: [BILLS-119hr8800rh.pdf](#)

Senate: [BILLS-119s4784rs.pdf](#)

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