

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 6738

To provide for the appointment of fellows in the John S. McCain Strategic Defense Fellows Program to term excepted service positions, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 13, 2023

Mr. BACON introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

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## A BILL

To provide for the appointment of fellows in the John S. McCain Strategic Defense Fellows Program to term excepted service positions, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Strategic Defense Fel-  
5 lows Program Act of 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. AMENDMENTS TO THE JOHN S. MCCAIN STRATEGIC**  
7 **DEFENSE FELLOWS PROGRAM.**

8 (a) **SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS.**—Subsection  
9 (d)(2) of section 932 of the John S. McCain National De-

1 fense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year (Public Law 115–  
2 232; 10 U.S.C. 1580 note prec.) is amended to read as  
3 follows:

4 “(2) GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION.—Out  
5 of the total number of individuals selected to partici-  
6 pate in the fellows program, which shall not exceed  
7 60 individuals in any year, no more than 20 percent  
8 may be from any of the following geographic regions:

9 “(A) The Northeast United States.

10 “(B) The Southeast United States.

11 “(C) The Midwest United States.

12 “(D) The Southwest United States.

13 “(E) The Western United States.

14 “(F) Alaska, Hawaii, United States terri-  
15 tories, and areas outside the United States.”.

16 (b) APPOINTMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT.—

17 Such section is further amended—

18 (1) in subsection (d)(3)—

19 (A) by striking “assigned” and inserting  
20 “appointed”; and

21 (B) by striking “assignment” and inserting  
22 “appointment”; and

23 (2) by amending subsections (e) and (f) to read  
24 as follows:

25 “(e) APPOINTMENT.—

1           “(1) IN GENERAL.—An individual who partici-  
2           pates in the fellows program shall be appointed into  
3           an excepted service position in the Department.

4           “(2) POSITION REQUIREMENTS.—Each year,  
5           the head of each Department of Defense Component  
6           shall submit to the Secretary of Defense placement  
7           opportunities for participants in the fellows pro-  
8           gram. Such placement opportunities shall provide for  
9           leadership development and potential commencement  
10          of a career track toward a position of senior leader-  
11          ship in the Department. The Secretary of Defense,  
12          in coordination with the heads of Department of De-  
13          fense Components, shall establish qualification re-  
14          quirements for the appointment of participants  
15          under paragraph (1).

16          “(3) APPOINTMENT TO POSITIONS.—Each year,  
17          the Secretary of Defense shall appoint participants  
18          in the fellows program to positions in the Depart-  
19          ment of Defense Components. In making such ap-  
20          pointments, the Secretary shall seek to best match  
21          the qualifications and skills of the participants with  
22          the requirements for positions available for appoint-  
23          ment.

24          “(4) TERM.—The term of each appointment  
25          under the fellows program shall be one year with the

1 option to extend the appointment up to one addi-  
2 tional year.

3 “(5) GRADE.—An individual appointed to a po-  
4 sition under the fellows program shall be appointed  
5 at a level between GS–10 and GS–12 of the General  
6 Schedule based on the directly related qualifications,  
7 skills, and professional experience of the individual.

8 “(6) EDUCATION LOAN REPAYMENT.—To the  
9 extent that funds are provided in advance in appro-  
10 priations Acts, the Secretary of Defense may repay  
11 a loan of a participant in the fellows program if the  
12 loan is described by subparagraph (A), (B), or (C)  
13 of section 16301(a)(1) of title 10, United States  
14 Code. Any repayment of a loan under this paragraph  
15 may require a minimum service agreement, as deter-  
16 mined by the Secretary.

17 “(7) DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMPONENT  
18 DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ‘Depart-  
19 ment of Defense Component’ means a Department  
20 of Defense Component, as set forth in section 111  
21 of title 10, United States Code.

22 “(f) CAREER DEVELOPMENT.—

23 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense  
24 shall ensure that participants in the fellows pro-  
25 gram—

1           “(A) receive career development opportuni-  
2           ties and support appropriate for the commence-  
3           ment of a career track within the Department  
4           leading toward a future position of senior lead-  
5           ership within the Department, including ongo-  
6           ing mentorship support through appropriate  
7           personnel from entities within the Department;  
8           and

9           “(B) are provided appropriate employment  
10          opportunities for competitive and excepted serv-  
11          ice positions in the Department upon successful  
12          completion of the fellows program.

13          “(2) PUBLICATION OF SELECTION.—The Sec-  
14          retary shall publish, on an internet website of the  
15          Department available to the public, the names of the  
16          individuals selected to participate in the fellows pro-  
17          gram.”.

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