

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

The Honorable Pete Visclosky  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Defense  
House Committee on Appropriations  
H-405 The Capitol  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Defense  
House Committee on Appropriations  
H-405 The Capitol  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Visclosky and Ranking Member Calvert,

As you consider defense appropriations for the upcoming fiscal year, we write to you to request that you include in your spending bill robust funding for the Rapid Innovation Fund (RIF) program.

With the United States losing technological edge over the world, the Department of Defense (DOD) has recognized the need to streamline and accelerate technology transition. RIF is a merit-based, highly competitive DOD-wide innovation program designed to bridge the “valley of death” that separates the development of new and innovative technology from its transition to a program of record, with subsequent fielding of real capability for our service members.

The program has proven remarkably effective in transitioning technologies, with 50 percent of RIF-funded projects being transitioned to acquisition programs or other users<sup>1</sup>. The 2018 Section 809 Panel Report on Streamlining and Codifying Acquisition Regulations said RIF was a “useful tool for enabling acquisition and integration of innovative capabilities developed by small businesses,<sup>2</sup>” and recommended increasing funding for it to \$750 million<sup>3</sup>. RIF was reauthorized permanently in the FY2017 NDAA.<sup>4</sup>

RIF is also vital to the DOD acquisition ecosystem because it specifically focuses on small business, an underutilized and underfunded part of the defense industrial base. Over 90% of RIF awards go to innovative small businesses, with 77% going to fund SBIR-developed technologies, which have already gone through its rigorous, competitive screening and development process<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> DOD INNOVATION PROGRAM: SOME TECHNOLOGIES HAVE TRANSITIONED TO MILITARY USERS, BUT STEPS CAN BE TAKEN TO IMPROVE PROGRAM METRICS AND OUTCOMES (GAO 15-241) (2015), *available at* <https://www.gao.gov/assets/680/670090.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> REPORT OF THE ADVISORY PANEL ON STREAMLINING AND CODIFYING ACQUISITION REGULATIONS, VOLUME 1 OF 3 188 (2018), *available at* [https://discover.dtic.mil/wp-content/uploads/809-Panel-2019/Volume1/Sec809Panel\\_Vol1-Report\\_Jan2018.pdf](https://discover.dtic.mil/wp-content/uploads/809-Panel-2019/Volume1/Sec809Panel_Vol1-Report_Jan2018.pdf), at 188.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*, at 193.

<sup>4</sup> Pub. L. No. 114-328, 130 STAT. 2048.

<sup>5</sup> Ted Bujewski, Associate Director, Office of Small Business Programs, DOD, Fiscal Year 2019 Rapid Innovation Fund (2019), Presentation to Congressional Staff [on file with authors].

Maintaining America's technological edge over our adversaries is vital to the security of our nation. Ensuring that the next generation of technologies is rapidly transitioned to our nation's servicemembers should be of paramount concern, and funding RIF would help do that.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nydia Velázquez  
Chairman  
House Committee on Small Business

Steve Chabot  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Small Business