

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5353

To establish a policy to promote and maintain digital and software development expertise in the workforce of the Department of Defense.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 6, 2019

Ms. HOULAHAN (for herself and Mr. MEADOWS) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To establish a policy to promote and maintain digital and software development expertise in the workforce of the Department of Defense.

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 “Armed Forces Digital
5 Advantage Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. POLICY ON THE TALENT MANAGEMENT OF DIGITAL**
7 **EXPERTISE AND SOFTWARE PROFESSIONALS.**

8 (a) POLICY.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—It shall be a policy of the
10 Department of Defense to promote and maintain

1 digital expertise and software development as core
2 competencies of civilian and military workforces of
3 the Department, and as a capability to support the
4 National Defense Strategy, which policy shall be
5 achieved by—

6 (A) the recruitment, development, and
7 incentivization of retention in and to the civilian
8 and military workforce of the Department of in-
9 dividuals with aptitude, experience, proficient
10 expertise, or a combination thereof in digital ex-
11 pertise and software development;

12 (B) at the discretion of the Secretaries of
13 the military departments, the development and
14 maintenance of civilian and military career
15 tracks related to digital expertise, and related
16 digital competencies for members of the Armed
17 Forces, including the development and mainte-
18 nance of training, education, talent manage-
19 ment, incentives, and promotion policies in sup-
20 port of members at all levels of such career
21 tracks; and

22 (C) the development and application of ap-
23 propriate readiness standards and metrics to
24 measure and report on the overall capability,
25 capacity, utilization, and readiness of digital en-

1 gineering professionals to develop and deliver
2 operational capabilities and employ modern
3 business practices.

4 (2) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this sec-
5 tion, “digital engineering” is the discipline and set
6 of skills involved in the creation, processing, trans-
7 mission, integration, and storage of digital data (in-
8 cluding but not limited to data science, machine
9 learning, software engineering, software product
10 management, and artificial intelligence product man-
11 agement).

12 (b) RESPONSIBILITY.—

13 (1) APPOINTMENT OF OFFICER.—Not later
14 than 270 days after the date of enactment of this
15 Act, the Secretary of Defense shall appoint a civilian
16 official responsible for the development and imple-
17 mentation of the policy set forth in subsection (a).
18 The official shall be known as the “Chief Digital En-
19 gineering Recruitment and Management Officer of
20 the Department of Defense” (in this section referred
21 to as the “Officer”).

22 (2) EXPIRATION OF APPOINTMENT.—The ap-
23 pointment of the Officer under paragraph (1) shall
24 expire on September 30, 2029.

1 (c) DUTIES.—In developing and providing for the dis-
2 charge of the policy set forth in subsection (a), the Officer
3 shall work with the Assistant Secretaries of the military
4 departments for Manpower and Reserve Affairs to carry
5 out the following:

6 (1) Develop for, and enhance within, the re-
7 cruitment programs of each Armed Force various
8 core initiatives, programs, activities, and mecha-
9 nisms, tailored to the unique needs of each Armed
10 Force, to identify and recruit civilian employees and
11 members of the Armed Forces with demonstrated
12 aptitude, interest, and proficiency in digital engi-
13 neering, and in science, technology, engineering, and
14 mathematics (STEM) generally, including initiatives,
15 programs, activities, and mechanisms to target pop-
16 ulations of individuals not typically aware of oppor-
17 tunities in the Department of Defense for a digital
18 engineering career.

19 (2) Identify and share with the military depart-
20 ments best practices around the development of
21 flexible career tracks and identifiers for digital engi-
22 neering and related digital competencies and mean-
23 ingful opportunities for career development, talent
24 management, and promotion within such career
25 tracks.

1 (3) Develop and maintain education, training,
2 doctrine, rotational opportunities, and professional
3 development activities to support the civilian and
4 military digital engineering workforce.

5 (4) Coordinate and synchronize digital force
6 management activities throughout the Department
7 of Defense, advise the Secretary of Defense on all
8 matters pertaining to the health and readiness of
9 digital forces, convene a Department-wide executive
10 steering group, and submit to Congress an annual
11 report on the readiness of digital forces and progress
12 toward achieving the policy set forth in subsection
13 (a).

14 (5) Create a Department-wide mechanism to
15 track digital expertise in the workforce, develop and
16 maintain organizational policies, strategies, and
17 plans sufficient to build, maintain, and refresh inter-
18 nal capacity at scale, and report to the Secretary
19 quarterly on the health and readiness the digital en-
20 gineering workforce.

21 (6) Assist the military departments in design-
22 ing, developing, and executing programs and incen-
23 tives to retain, track, and oversee digital expertise
24 among civilian employees of the Department and
25 members of the Armed Forces on active duty.

1 (7) At the request of the Chief of Staff of an
2 Armed Force, or the head of another component or
3 element of the Department, undertake an executive
4 search for key leadership positions in digital engi-
5 neering in such Armed Force, component, or ele-
6 ment, and develop and deploy agile hiring processes
7 to fill such positions.

8 (8) Identify necessary changes in authorities,
9 policies, resources, or a combination thereof to fur-
10 ther the policy set forth in subsection (a), and sub-
11 mit to Congress a report on such changes.

12 (d) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.—Not later than May 1,
13 2020, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Com-
14 mittees on Armed Services of the House of Representa-
15 tives and the Senate a plan to carry out the requirements
16 of this section. The plan shall include the following:

17 (1) An assessment of progress of the Secretary
18 in recruiting an individual to serve as the Officer re-
19 quired to be appointed under subsection (b).

20 (2) A timeline for implementation of the re-
21 quirements of this section, including input from each
22 military department on its unique timeline.

1 (3) Recommendations for any legislative or ad-
2 ministrative action required to meet the require-
3 ments of this section.

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