

Understanding the NDAA: Additional Resources

1. Congressional Research Service. "Defense Primer: The NDAA Process." Updated February 1, 2024.

Available at: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10515>

This comprehensive primer provides an excellent foundational overview of the NDAA process, explaining how the annual authorization bill differs from appropriations, key committees involved, and typical timeline. The CRS analysis breaks down major title areas covered in the NDAA and explains the relationship between authorization and appropriation. Essential for understanding the basic mechanics and constitutional framework of defense authorization. Particularly valuable for its neutral, factual presentation and regular updates reflecting current practices.

2. Congressional Research Service. "Defense Primer: Navigating the NDAA." Updated February 22, 2024.

Available at: <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF10516>

This companion primer focuses on the structure and organization of the NDAA itself, explaining how to navigate the complex bill and understand its various titles and provisions. Complements the process primer by providing practical guidance on reading and analyzing NDAA content. Particularly useful for students learning to parse the technical language and organizational structure of defense authorization legislation.

3. Harrison, Todd, and Seamus Daniels. "Defense Budget Analysis Reports." Center for Strategic and International Studies, ongoing.

Available at:
<https://www.csis.org/programs/international-security-program/defense-budget-analysis/analysis>

This CSIS program provides essential analysis of how the NDAA fits into the broader defense budget process, including the relationship between the authorization act and appropriations bills. The ongoing reports clearly explain budget authority versus outlays, the role of unfunded priorities lists, and how policy riders in the NDAA affect spending decisions. Includes helpful analysis that illustrates the complex interplay between authorization and appropriation. Critical for students seeking to understand the practical financial implications of NDAA provisions.

5. Congressional Research Service. "FY2024 NDAA Funding Authorizations and Legislative Activity: In Brief." Report R48057.

Available at: <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48057>

This report provides detailed analysis of a recent NDAA, offering insights into the political dynamics surrounding NDAA passage, including how the "must-pass" nature of defense authorization affects legislative strategy and amendment processes. Examines recent trends in NDAA politics, including increasing partisanship and the use of defense bills as vehicles for unrelated policy initiatives.

Provides valuable insights into why certain provisions succeed or fail and how political considerations shape the final product.

6. Government Accountability Office. "Defense Acquisitions: Assessments of Selected Weapon Systems." Annual Report Series.

Available at: <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-25-107569>

The GAO's annual weapons systems assessments provide concrete examples of how NDAA acquisition reforms are implemented and their effectiveness. These reports track major defense programs and evaluate whether congressional directives in previous NDAs have achieved their intended goals. Essential for understanding the practical impact of NDAA provisions beyond their enactment. Offers case studies that illustrate both successful reforms and persistent challenges in defense management.

7. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024. H.R. 2670/S. 2226, 118th Congress.

House version: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/2670> Senate version: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/2226>

Examining recent NDAA legislation directly provides students with primary source material to analyze how policy initiatives develop from proposal to enactment. The Congressional record shows the full text, amendments, voting records, and legislative history. This hands-on analysis of actual legislation helps students understand how theoretical concepts about congressional authorization translate into specific policy language and implementation directives. Essential for understanding both the scope and limitations of congressional defense oversight.