

— U.S. Congresswoman —  
**TAMMY DUCKWORTH**  
— Proudly Serving Illinois' 8th District —

## Congresswoman Duckworth's 2015 Year in Review

[SCHAUMBURG, IL] – Today, Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth (IL-08) released her “2015 Year in Review” report outlining her work in the Eighth District and in Congress over the last 12 months. In 2015, the Congresswoman fought for our troops and Veterans and she helped manufacturers as well as small businesses create jobs. She also continued advocating for her constituents by supporting working mothers and middle-class families, improving government accountability and reducing waste in Washington. This report summarizes the Congresswoman’s work for her constituents in 2015, and more information is available at [www.duckworth.house.gov](http://www.duckworth.house.gov).

### Personal Accountability

- Continuing her commitment to accountability, good governance and reducing waste Congresswoman Duckworth is on track to return a similar amount of 2015 office funds to taxpayers as she did during her first two years in office combined. During her first full term, [she returned a total of \\$179,712.05](#) to the United States Treasury.
- Congresswoman Duckworth introduced the bipartisan [Giveback Deficit Reduction Act](#) with Reps. Reid Ribble (R-WI), Ron Kind (D-WI) and Pat Tiberi (R-OH). This legislation would require that all unspent funds allocated to Members of Congress be returned to the Treasury and used to pay down the deficit.
- Duckworth cosponsored the [No Budget, No Pay Act](#) and the [Hold Congress Accountable Act](#) to ensure that taxpayers aren’t forced to pay the salaries of Senators and Representatives if Congress is unable to pass a budget or if the Federal Government shuts down.
- Teaming with Rep. Rob Woodall (R-GA), Congresswoman Duckworth introduced the bipartisan [Stop the Frank Act](#) to eliminate the antiquated Franking privilege that allows Members of Congress to avoid pre-paying for postage fees, as ordinary citizens are required to do.

## Successfully Advocating for the Eighth District

- The Congresswoman and her staff assisted nearly 750 Eighth District constituents recover a total of \$424,787 in unpaid VA, Social Security and other federal benefits.
- After Congresswoman Duckworth's years of work to help Metra replace and rebuild the outdated bridge over Elgin's Fox River—which included leading several delegation letters and even [a tour of the bridge site](#)—the Congresswoman [announced a \\$14 million federal TIGER Grant for the project](#). The renewed Fox River Bridge will save an estimated 1.2 million hours in delays over the project's lifetime.
- In 2015, Congresswoman Duckworth also announced millions of dollars in additional grants for the Eighth District, including:
  - [nearly \\$910,000 to support the Elgin Family Care Center](#);
  - [more than \\$1.5 million to help ensure fire](#) departments throughout the Eighth District and neighboring communities have the resources and personnel they need to keep communities safe;
  - a share of [more than \\$18 million in federal funds to fight homelessness and support low-income and middle-class families](#);
  - more than [\\$4.6 million for Des Plaines-based Gas Technology Institute](#) to develop innovative energy efficient technologies and boost the Eighth District's economy.
- In late 2015, Congresswoman Duckworth voted to pass the bipartisan [FAST Act](#), which will help ensure that our nation's highways and bridges are safe and well-maintained, boost Amtrak funding and provide the Eighth District as well as the rest of Illinois with nearly \$3 billion in public transit investments. President Obama later signed the *FAST Act* into law.
- Congresswoman Duckworth worked to reduce the impact O'Hare airport noise pollution has on Eighth District communities, including cosponsoring the [Silent Skies Act](#) to encourage airlines to use quieter aircraft and joining with other members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation to support noise reduction efforts.
- Throughout the year, the Congresswoman joined members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation in advocating for federal disaster relief funding for cities and neighborhoods affected by flooding as well as other natural disasters.

## Improving Government Accountability and Cutting Waste

- The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that a common-sense [provision authored by Congresswoman Duckworth to reduce redundancy in Armed Forces uniforms will save taxpayers more than \\$4 billion over the next 5 years](#).
- Congresswoman Duckworth introduced the bipartisan [SERV Act](#) with Congressman Darrell Issa (R-CA) to protect Veterans and their earned benefits from fraud and abuse. The legislation would ensure certain benefits reserved for Veterans who have sacrificed in service to our nation—including federal contracting preferences—can no longer be claimed by undeserving individuals who haven't served in the Armed Forces.
- A Duckworth provision that became law as part of the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act will [improve Department of Defense compliance with ethics rules and help prevent “revolving door” violations](#) among senior officials.
- After serving on the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform for two years, Congresswoman Duckworth [was selected by her colleagues to serve as Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Transportation and Public Assets](#). The Subcommittee has jurisdiction over several areas of public policy that directly and significantly impact the Eighth District, including overseeing the U.S. Department of Transportation, Department of Housing and Urban Development, FEMA, and others.
- Congresswoman Duckworth and Senator Durbin [introduced legislation to close a loophole in federal law](#) that enables visiting foreign nationals using the Visa Waiver Program—which in the past have included terrorists including a 9/11 co-conspirator—to legally purchase and possess firearms. Those using this program are currently the only visiting foreign nationals allowed to purchase these weapons.
- In addition to working to improve our nation's gun safety policies while respecting the Second Amendment, Congresswoman Duckworth advocated in Committee for a fairer, more humane and less wasteful criminal justice system [and cosponsored several bills to reform outdated policies](#). The bills she cosponsored would shift the focus of federal resources from non-violent offenders toward offenders who have committed crimes that are more serious, improve the federal sentencing and corrections systems, reduce recidivism and expand drug prevention and treatment programs.
- Congresswoman Duckworth also helped introduce the bipartisan [Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act](#) to better address heroin and opioid problems that affect Eighth District families and families throughout Illinois. The legislation would expand community-based prevention and treatment efforts to combat addiction and encourage alternatives to prison, like Veterans Treatment Courts, for non-violent drug offenders.
- Through [an amendment Duckworth proposed to the National Defense Authorization Act that later became law](#), the Department of Defense will be able to make better, more informed budgetary decisions with a more accurate workforce management system.
- After learning servicemembers and other citizens living abroad may face difficulties in casting absentee ballots, Congresswoman Duckworth [led every member of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee in a bipartisan call for a federal review of the Department of Defense's Federal Voting Assistance Program](#). Following her call for a review, the Government Accountability Office announced a study of the program.
- Duckworth supported legislation to increase transparency, improve accountability and reduce dark money's influence in the nation's campaign finance system.

## Creating Jobs and Helping Illinois Manufacturers and Small Businesses

- Duckworth introduced the [\*Make It At Home Act\*](#) with Reps. Cheri Bustos (D-IL) and Dave Loebsack (D-IA) to help create jobs and improve national security by increasing American manufacturing at arsenals, including Rock Island Arsenal in Illinois. The legislation, which would also reduce our reliance on foreign manufacturers for critical weapons systems, was unanimously included as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act that passed the House Armed Services Committee. Similar legislation proposed by the Congresswoman was signed into law.
- Congresswoman Duckworth introduced the [\*Community College to Career Act\*](#), which helps support innovative partnerships between community colleges, technical colleges and businesses to train students to fill high-demand jobs like Harper College's Advanced Manufacturing Lab. In September, the Congresswoman visited the lab at Harper College.
- Congresswoman Duckworth fought to support Eighth District small businesses and jobs by [advocating for](#) and [voting to renew the Export-Import Bank's expired authority to finance entrepreneurial efforts](#), which overwhelmingly directly supports businesses seeking to sell their goods and products overseas.
- Duckworth introduced the bipartisan [\*Career and Technical Education \(CTE\) Opportunity Act\*](#) with Rep. Ryan Costello (R-PA) to help ease the burden of student loan debt, close the "skills gap" and increase the number of graduates ready for the positions employers are seeking to fill.
- Working with her Advisory Committee on Asian Americans, the Small Business Administration (SBA) and Ascent Innovations LLC, the Congresswoman's office hosted a Small Business and Federal Contracting Workshop in Schaumburg to help ensure Eighth District small businesses are able to access the many resources available to them and compete in the federal marketplace.
- Congresswoman Duckworth [led several of her colleagues](#) in advocating for strong funding of job training and adult education programs to grow and maintain our nation's competitive edge.
- In May, Congresswoman Duckworth introduced the bipartisan [\*Veterans Small Business Enhancement Act\*](#) with Rep. Paul Cook (R-CA) to enable Veteran-owned small businesses to apply for and receive unwanted government surplus or excess property.
- The Congresswoman [proposed several amendments](#) to the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act [that would make it easier for small businesses in and around the Eighth District](#) to compete for government contracts, all of which passed the Armed Services Committee unanimously. Her provisions would help provide greater accountability for senior agency executives who are responsible for overseeing small business subcontracting, remove barriers to capital for small businesses, improve training for entrepreneurs and advocates and allow more small businesses to compete for federal construction contracts.

## Effectively Advocating for Veterans and our Troops

- Congresswoman Duckworth co-authored the bipartisan [\*Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans \(SAV\) Act\*](#), which passed both the House and Senate unanimously and was signed into law. The legislation, named after 28-year-old Marine Veteran Clay Hunt who tragically took his own life, reduces the barriers preventing our nation's heroes from receiving quality mental health care and takes a multi-faceted approach to improving mental health services for Veterans.
- The Congresswoman authored 12 provisions to cut waste, improve quality of life, increase readiness and create jobs that passed through the House Armed Services Committee. All of these provisions passed the full House of Representatives and 11 were signed into law.
- A Duckworth provision to remove language in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would have delayed predatory lending protections for servicemembers [\*was one of the few Democratic amendments to pass the Armed Services Committee\*](#). In 2013, Duckworth sent a letter with 53 of her colleagues to the Department of Defense (DoD) calling for increased protections for members of the military from high cost loans. In response, [\*DoD proposed a rule in 2014\*](#) to extend Military Lending Act protections to all forms of credit targeting members of the military. Without Duckworth's amendment, the NDAA would have unnecessarily delayed the rule change for as long as a year. In 2014, Duckworth [\*wrote an op-ed detailing the importance of this issue\*](#).
- The Congresswoman introduced the [\*Military Consumer Protection Act\*](#), which would empower the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) to defend our servicemembers from unscrupulous actors in the consumer financial marketplace.
- Congresswoman Duckworth introduced the bipartisan [\*Servicemember Student Loan Affordability Act\*](#) to fix a provision in federal law that unintentionally discourages members of the military from consolidating or refinancing pre-service student loans.
- With firm conviction that Congress owes citizens—particularly the brave Americans who wear the uniform—an honest debate about the nature of the threat we face and the strength, determination and resilience that will be required of all Americans to defeat ISIL, Congresswoman Duckworth consistently advocated for a Congressional vote to authorize the use of military force against ISIL.
- The bipartisan [\*Military Spouses Achieving College Education for Survivors \(ACES\) Act\*](#), which Congresswoman Duckworth introduced with Congressman Scott Rigell (R-VA), passed through the House Veterans Affairs Committee as part of a bipartisan, comprehensive pro-Veterans legislative package. This bipartisan legislation would provide spouses whose husband or wife died in the line of duty after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the time they need to fully use the 36-month Fry Scholarship benefit without fear of it being cut short halfway through their educational pursuits.
- Congresswoman Duckworth helped introduce the [\*Military Enlistment Opportunity Act\*](#) with a bipartisan coalition of House Members. Their legislation would authorize eligible individuals, including young undocumented immigrants who were brought to America as children, to achieve Legal Permanent Resident status by serving honorably in the United States Military for a minimum of five years.

- The Congresswoman [led a bipartisan letter signed by 29 Members of Congress to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense requesting inclusion of \\$30 million for peer-reviewed orthopaedic research](#) in 2016 Defense Appropriations legislation. Orthopaedic research is crucial to the treatment of servicemen and women returning from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with wounds to their extremities. The letter looks to maintain funding from the previous year.
- Congresswoman Duckworth voted to pass the *Surface Transportation and Veterans Health Care Choice Improvement Act*, which averted a devastating \$2.6 billion budget shortfall in the VA and encouraged the VA to implement reforms that consolidate all non-VA care into a single Veterans Choice Program.
- A Duckworth provision that the President signed into law requires the GAO to address security and planning concerns by assessing DoD's guidance for providing support to civilian authorities in the event of a domestic cyber-attack.

## A Voice for Working Mothers

- Congresswoman Duckworth introduced the bipartisan [\*Friendly Airports for Mothers \(FAM\) Act\*](#), which would ensure new mothers traveling through large and medium-hub airports have access to safe, clean, convenient and accessible lactation rooms. After hearing the Congresswoman's testimony about her legislation and the needs of new mothers, the Chicago City Council voted to recommend lactation rooms be placed in every terminal at both major Chicago airports.
- Congresswoman Duckworth supported a bipartisan government funding compromise that nearly doubles funding to fight childhood hunger through the summer EBT program, which helps families afford to put food on the table during summer months when free school lunches are not available.
- In 2015, the Congresswoman voted to permanently extend tax credits that help working families and cosponsored legislation to raise the minimum wage and ensure employees receive paid family and medical leave.
- Congresswoman Duckworth helped introduce the [\*Affordability is Access Act\*](#) to ensure women maintain access to affordable and safe oral contraceptives. The legislation clarifies that insurance companies are required to cover these contraceptives without cost sharing whether they are prescribed or purchased over-the-counter.
- In the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, the Congresswoman worked to ensure Americans cannot be fired for their reproductive choices by proposing an amendment to protect employees using infertility treatments from facing employer retribution. She also spoke out about efforts to cut funding for women's health care and against proposals to defund Planned Parenthood.

## Working for Seniors and Americans with Disabilities

- Congresswoman Duckworth introduced the [\*Seniors and Veterans Emergency \(SAVE\) Benefits Act\*](#) to help Veterans and seniors around the nation by providing a one-time benefit boost to offset the lack of 2016 Social Security cost-of-living adjustment (COLA).
- [\*Congresswoman Duckworth received the Jerry Prete Award from the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans\*](#) to honor her outstanding leadership in advocating for improving the lives of retired Illinoisans.
- Working with State Senator Noland and State Representative Moeller's offices, Congresswoman Duckworth's office hosted a senior resource fair in Elgin to give Eighth District seniors an opportunity to hear directly from Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, Flood Insurance officials and others about issues that affect them.
- Congresswoman Duckworth held a telephone town hall meeting focused on Social Security and Medicare and took questions from numerous Eighth District constituents. Duckworth has been a leader in protecting and strengthening Social Security and Medicare since she arrived in Congress.
- Congresswoman Duckworth cosponsored the *One Social Security Act* to prevent a 19 percent cut to disability benefits in 2016 without adding a single dollar to the Federal deficit or the Federal debt.
- Throughout the year, Congresswoman Duckworth worked in her community to highlight the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. She attended several events, [penned an op-ed](#) and spoke at [ADA 25 Chicago's Disability Inclusion Summit](#) about the importance of accessibility and highlighted the improvements that still must be made to ensure equal opportunities for people with disabilities in education, public transit, the workplace and elsewhere.
- Along with founder and co-chair of the Bipartisan Disabilities Caucus, Congressman Jim Langevin (D-RI), Duckworth helped introduce the [\*Transit Accessibility Innovation Act\*](#) to create a competitive grant program to encourage public transit systems to make public transportation more accessible.
- In January, the Congresswoman joined Congressman Pat Tiberi (R-OH) as an original cosponsor of the [\*Competitive Bidding Improvement Act\*](#), which would reduce the number of bad actors participating in the durable medical equipment, prosthetic and orthotic devices and supplies program within the Medicare program and promote fair competition.
- Joining amputee advocates, [\*Duckworth opposed a proposed Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services \(CMS\) rule that would have severely cut reimbursement rates for amputee treatment and prosthetic devices. CMS later chose not to finalize the proposed rule.\*](#)

## Supporting Students and Education

- Congresswoman Duckworth hosted a College Savings Seminar at Lake Park High School for prospective college students, current college students and families looking to save for higher education. At the seminar, Duckworth made financial aid experts as well as representatives from Harper College, Roosevelt University, College of DuPage and Elgin Community College available to discuss FAFSA deadlines, best practices for saving for college, 529 college accounts, scholarship opportunities and education tax credits.
- Congresswoman Duckworth introduced the bipartisan  [Servicemember Student Loan Affordability Act](#)  to fix a provision in federal law that unintentionally discourages members of the military from consolidating or refinancing pre-service student loans.
- Congresswoman Duckworth voted to pass the bipartisan  [Every Student Succeeds Act](#)  to improve our nation’s education system by replacing the flawed No Child Left Behind policy.
- Duckworth introduced the bipartisan  [Career and Technical Education \(CTE\) Opportunity Act](#)  to help ease the burden of student loan debt, close the “skills gap” and increase the number of graduates ready for the positions employers are seeking to fill.
- Congresswoman Duckworth cosponsored the  [Bank on Students Emergency Loan Refinancing Act](#) , which would allow individuals with high interest rates on outstanding student loan debt to refinance at lower interest rates that are currently offered to new borrowers.
- The Congresswoman cosponsored the bipartisan *Strong Start for America’s Children Act* to establish an innovative 10-year federal-state partnership to expand and improve preschool early learning opportunities.
- In light of President Barack Obama’s proposal to provide two years of community college free to all students, Duckworth hosted Elgin resident and Harper College student Homira Wardak as her guest on Capitol Hill for the 2015 State of the Union Address.

## **Outreach and Accessibility to Constituents**

### **Accessibility to Constituents**

Congresswoman Duckworth and her staff traveled throughout the Eighth District to make themselves more easily available to constituents. At her office's regularly held satellite office hours in convenient locations, approximately 1,000 constituents met with staff to receive assistance and guidance without having to commute long distances. Duckworth's office also hosted an open house at the District Office in Schaumburg where constituents had an opportunity to meet staff and learn about services the Congresswoman can provide.

### **Casework**

Congresswoman Duckworth makes it a top priority to proactively help constituents seeking assistance from a federal agency, including assisting with Social Security, Medicare and VA benefits. Congresswoman Duckworth is proud that she helped her neighbors solve hundreds of cases and helped them receive nearly \$425,000 in benefits last year and more than \$1 million since arriving in Congress.

### **Community Service**

Congresswoman Duckworth works hard to make the Eighth District a better place through community service and volunteering. In 2015, Congresswoman Duckworth joined her neighbors in giving back to the community several times, including donating her time in Schaumburg on New Year's Eve to help fight hunger and feed starving children abroad. In advance of Thanksgiving, the Congresswoman also helped distribute turkey dinners to less fortunate families at Schaumburg's Church of the Holy Spirit Food Pantry. The food pantry is managed by LaVerne Horgan, a long-time church volunteer that [Congresswoman Duckworth hosted as her guest for His Holiness Pope Francis' historic Joint Address to Congress.](#)

### **Grant Outreach**

Congresswoman Duckworth's office held six grant workshops to help teach constituents the best practices for obtaining grants and upcoming funding opportunities from Federal and State agencies as well as private organizations in the areas of Non-Profit Development, Arts and Humanities, Hunger and Food Security, First Responders, Education and Infrastructure.

### **Tax Preparation Clinic**

Congresswoman Duckworth, in conjunction with the Center for Economic Progress, hosted a free tax preparation clinic at the Gail Borden Library in Elgin to assist Eighth District constituents with their taxes.

### **Issue Advisory Committees**

The Congresswoman [convened several advisory committees on issues of importance to the Eighth District](#) to hear firsthand from her constituents and encourage more members of the community to give their input on the future of the District, Illinois and the nation. Committee members were selected based on their leadership in the community and their character. Among the advisory committees Duckworth convened were committees on: Small Business, Manufacturing, Asian Americans, Education and Immigration.

### **Immigration Services Best Practices Panel**

At the Schaumburg Township District Library, Congresswoman Duckworth's office hosted a panel on immigration services featuring representatives from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), immigration attorneys and community organizations. Attendance at the panel reached capacity, with a number of local government officials and Eighth District first responders attending.

### **Constituent Mail**

To keep her neighbors informed about her work in Washington, the Congresswoman responded to more than 40,000 constituent letters in a timely manner.

### **Military Service Academy Nominations**

The Congresswoman [solicited applications](#) from Eighth District high school students seeking a Congressional nomination to a U.S. Military Service Academy. Her office hosted informational sessions about the application process at the Elgin Armory as well as at the Schaumburg Township District Library. Along with a panel of judges, Duckworth [selected from the applicants a group of outstanding students](#) to receive Congressional nominations to attend West Point, the Air Force Academy, the Naval Academy or the Merchant Marine Academy.

### **Congressional App Challenge**

The App Challenge was created in 2013 to help students around the nation develop skills in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields by encouraging them to learn new skills and develop their own computer software. This competition is currently underway, and a panel of local judges will review submissions from the Eighth District as well as select a winner that will be highlighted on the U.S. House of Representatives' website and featured in an exhibit in the U.S. Capitol building.

### **Congressional Art Competition**

As a strong supporter of the arts, Congresswoman Duckworth is proud to offer Eighth District high school students an opportunity to showcase their talents and creativity on a national stage through the annual Congressional Art Competition. [The winning piece from 2015, Conant High School Senior Ryoka Lulu Matsuno's \*Tokyo\*, is currently on display in the Cannon Tunnel of the U.S. Capitol Building.](#)

### **Social Media**

Congresswoman Duckworth connected with her neighbors through various types of social media, maintaining active and informative [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts.

## **Strengthening Our Bond with Israel**

In August, Congresswoman Duckworth [traveled to Israel on a fact-finding mission](#) with Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-MD) and several other Members of Congress. The mission provided the Members an opportunity to meet with Israeli leaders and tour strategically important locations. Duckworth is a Member of the House Armed Services Committee and spent 23 years as a member of the Armed Reserve Forces. She retired at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 2014.