

Knudsen Institute Calls for Creation of a Civilian Industrial Reserve Force to Strengthen U.S. Defense Readiness

New proposal outlines national volunteer reserve of skilled tradespeople to address workforce shortages across the Defense Industrial Base

CHICKASHA, OK, UNITED STATES, October 21, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Knudsen Institute has proposed the creation of a Civilian Industrial Reserve Force (CIRF) - a national volunteer workforce designed to ensure the United States can rapidly expand defense production during times of crisis.

Modeled after the National Guard and Reserves, the CIRF would establish a ready pool of welders, machinists, sustainment technicians, and other skilled tradespeople who train part-time and can be mobilized when surge manufacturing is required.

"The Guard keeps soldiers ready to fight - the CIRF would keep America ready to build," said Michael Morford, CEO of Knudsen and author of the Institute's white paper "Civilian Industrial Reserve Force: A National Surge Workforce for the Modern Era." "Without a mobilizable skilled workforce, even the most advanced weapons programs grind to a halt."

The Department of Defense's 2024 National Defense Industrial Strategy warns that the defense market "lacks sufficiently skilled workers." A GAO study projects the Navy alone will require more than 174,000 new workers in the next decade, while Deloitte and the Manufacturing Institute forecast a two-million-person shortfall across U.S. manufacturing by 2033.

The CIRF concept expands on congressional discussions of a proposed Civil Reserve Manufacturing Network (CRMN), but focuses on people rather than machinery. Volunteers would train at local technical schools or regional manufacturing centers, receive modest annual stipends, and maintain current certifications. Estimated annual cost: \$3-4 billion, less than one-



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for Applied Research on Surge Theory



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tenth of the Guard and Reserve budget.

"Machines and new buildings don't build deterrence - people do," Morford said. "The CIRF ensures we have both the tools and the trained hands to respond when the nation needs them."

The Knudsen Institute's full policy framework is detailed in its white paper Civilian Industrial Reserve Force: A National Surge Workforce for the Modern Era, available at www.surgetheory.org/CIRF.

About the Knudsen Institute

The Knudsen Institute is a nonpartisan research organization dedicated to strengthening industrial resilience and rebuilding the U.S. Defense Industrial Base.

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