

Analysis of Section 202: Amendments to the Joint Requirements Oversight Council

Key Points

Section 202 of the Fostering Reform and Government Efficiency in Defense (FoRGED) Act (Senate Bill 5618) proposes significant modifications to the responsibilities and authorities of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC), as currently defined in Section 181 of Title 10, United States Code. The primary changes involve the removal of JROC's authority to "approve" and "validate" joint military requirements, the replacement of "validate" with "review," and a revision to the process for handling dissenting views within the council. These proposed amendments signal a potential shift in the oversight and decision-making processes for the Department of Defense's acquisition of joint capabilities, with anticipated effects on efficiency and the distribution of responsibilities.

History of the recommendation

The Joint Requirements Oversight Council was established in June 1986 following the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act ¹. This landmark legislation was a response to perceived inefficiencies and a lack of effective joint operations highlighted by events such as the failed Operation Eagle Claw in 1980 and the invasion of Grenada in 1983 ³. These operations exposed significant challenges in inter-service coordination and underscored the need for a more integrated approach to military planning and acquisition ³. The JROC was conceived as a mechanism to foster consensus among the military services on acquisition priorities, eliminate redundancies, and ensure that the needs of warfighters were effectively addressed within the Department of Defense's acquisition process ³. The council was intended to act as a collaborative body where senior leaders from each service could weigh the merits of competing demands and prioritize joint military requirements ³.

Initially, the JROC's role was primarily reactive, focusing on major Service programs with relatively infrequent meetings ¹. However, over time, its authority and scope expanded. During the mid-1990s, under the leadership of Admiral William Owens, the JROC experienced a period of substantial growth, with a significant increase in the frequency of meetings and an expanded focus to encompass broader joint warfighting issues ¹. This evolution was supported by the introduction of the Joint Warfighting Capability Assessment (JWCA) process, which enabled a more proactive approach to identifying and addressing joint military needs ¹. By 1996, the JROC's

responsibilities were codified in U.S. Code, tasking it with providing recommendations to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the priorities of military systems, acquisition programs, and the prioritization of programs based on available resources¹. The Chairman, in turn, could either accept or decline these recommendations before formally advising senior civilian leaders within the Department of Defense¹. The National Defense Acts of 1996 and 1997 further solidified the JROC's statutory footing and increased congressional oversight of its activities, mandating that JROC analyses supporting the Chairman's recommendations be made available to relevant congressional committees⁵.

The proposed amendments in Section 202 of the FoRGED Act are not occurring in isolation but are part of an ongoing series of efforts to refine the defense acquisition system. In recent years, both Congress and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) have focused on the effectiveness and efficiency of the joint requirements process and the JROC's role within it. For instance, the FY2017 National Defense Authorization Act directed the Joint Staff to revise its requirements process to place a greater emphasis on joint programs rather than service-specific initiatives⁶. Similarly, the 2024 NDAA mandated a streamlined requirements development process, particularly for programs below the Major Defense Acquisition Program threshold, aligning them with the Adaptive Acquisition Framework⁷. The GAO has also issued several reports highlighting areas for improvement in JROC's processes, including recommendations for earlier review of Analysis of Alternatives, enhanced quality of resource estimates, better prioritization of requirements, and addressing potential redundancies across programs⁸. A 2021 GAO report (GAO-22-104432) specifically noted issues with the reliability of data on the effectiveness of the revised joint approval process implemented in 2018, recommending improvements to the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS) information system⁶.

Senate Bill 5618, the FoRGED Act, which contains Section 202, was introduced in the Senate on December 19, 2024, by Senator Wicker¹¹. The bill, which aims to promote defense innovation, was subsequently read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services¹¹. As of the available information, the bill remains in the early stages of the legislative process, indicating that the proposed changes to the JROC are currently under consideration and could be subject to further modifications as the legislative process unfolds.

Desired Effect of the recommendation

The proposed amendments in Section 202 of the FoRGED Act are likely intended to streamline the Department of Defense's joint requirements process. By removing the

JROC's authority to "approve" and "validate" joint military requirements, the expectation is that the process will become more efficient, potentially reducing the time and administrative burden associated with these more rigorous levels of review. The shift to a "review" function suggests a move towards a more advisory role for the JROC, allowing it to focus on providing strategic guidance and identifying joint equities earlier in the acquisition lifecycle rather than acting as a final decision authority for all requirements⁴. This adjustment could foster a more agile and responsive system for developing and acquiring joint military capabilities.

Furthermore, these amendments may aim to elevate the JROC's focus to broader strategic oversight. By relinquishing the responsibility for detailed validation of individual requirements, the council could potentially dedicate more of its senior leadership's time and attention to overarching strategic issues. This includes identifying significant joint capability gaps, ensuring that proposed requirements are tightly aligned with the National Defense Strategy, and providing high-level strategic guidance on the future direction of joint military capabilities⁴. This shift could allow the JROC to function more effectively as an advisory body to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, concentrating on strategic prioritization and high-level recommendations rather than the detailed scrutiny of every individual program requirement.

Another significant desired effect appears to be the empowerment of the newly established Joint Requirements and Programming Board (JRPB). The amendment stipulating that JROC must "first seek concurrence from the Joint Requirements and Programming Board of the Department of Defense" for dissenting views before presenting them to the Chairman (Section 202(a)(2)) indicates an intended increase in the JRPB's influence within the defense requirements process. Section 204 of the same bill outlines the establishment of this board¹¹, suggesting a deliberate effort to create a new entity with a significant role in shaping joint requirements. This requirement for concurrence could foster greater collaboration and consensus-building at a different level within the DoD, potentially resolving disagreements and refining requirements before they reach the JROC for review. It might also serve as a mechanism to ensure broader organizational buy-in and support for joint requirements across various stakeholders.

Finally, the removal of the specific exception for performance requirements in subsection (e) of Section 181 of Title 10 is likely intended as a technical and conforming amendment. This adjustment aims to streamline the language of the statute and reduce any potential ambiguity or unnecessary administrative steps

associated with the previous specific references to performance requirements.

Potential Negative impacts of the recommendations

One potential negative consequence of removing the JROC's authority to "approve" joint requirements is a perceived weakening of oversight. The act of approval by a council of senior military leaders carries significant weight and signifies a high degree of confidence in the necessity and feasibility of a proposed capability. Without this formal approval, there might be a perception, both within the Department of Defense and among external stakeholders such as Congress, that joint requirements are not being subjected to the same level of rigorous scrutiny and endorsement.

Similarly, replacing "validate" with "review" could reduce the rigor of the process for ensuring that joint requirements are truly necessary, achievable, and aligned with overarching strategic priorities. Validation typically implies a more thorough and formal process of verification, while review suggests a less intensive examination. This shift could potentially lead to the acceptance of poorly defined or less critical requirements that might have been challenged under a more stringent validation process.

A related concern is the potential for a resurgence of service-centric approaches to requirements generation. The JROC was established, in part, to provide a joint perspective and to act as a check against individual military services prioritizing their own needs over those of the joint force³. Without the JROC's strong validation authority, individual services might have greater latitude to advance requirements that primarily benefit their specific domains, potentially leading to duplication of effort or a lack of true jointness in developed capabilities.

The new requirement for JROC members to first seek concurrence from the Joint Requirements and Programming Board (JRPB) for dissenting views could also have unintended negative consequences. This additional step might discourage individual JROC members from raising concerns or objections, potentially leading to groupthink and a lack of robust critical analysis of proposed requirements. The process of seeking concurrence could also introduce another layer of bureaucracy, potentially slowing down the resolution of disagreements and the overall pace of the requirements process.

Furthermore, the amendments might create a period of ambiguity regarding the specific roles and responsibilities of different entities involved in the joint requirements process. With the removal of JROC's validation authority and the

introduction of the JRPB, the lines of authority and accountability might become less clear, potentially leading to confusion and inefficiencies as organizations adapt to the revised structure.

Finally, a perceived weakening of the JROC's authority could indirectly diminish the influence of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the defense acquisition process. The JROC serves as a key instrument through which the Chairman provides joint military advice to the Secretary of Defense and other senior leaders⁴. If the JROC's recommendations are no longer backed by the formal authority of approval and validation, their impact on senior civilian leadership's decision-making regarding defense programs could potentially be reduced.

Mitigations the organization will take to diminish the negative impacts

To mitigate the potential negative impacts of these amendments, the Department of Defense will likely need to strengthen internal review processes within the Joint Staff (J8), the organization that supports the JROC. This could involve developing more detailed and rigorous review criteria and incorporating independent technical and operational expertise to ensure that joint capability requirements continue to be thoroughly assessed even without formal JROC validation. Establishing internal quality control measures and checkpoints within the Joint Staff's review process could further enhance the rigor of the assessment [Mitigation based on best practices in technical review and quality assurance].

Clear guidelines and procedures for the newly established Joint Requirements and Programming Board (JRPB) will be crucial to ensure a smooth and effective workflow, particularly regarding the handling of dissenting views. The Department of Defense will need to clearly define the JRPB's role, responsibilities, and its interaction with the JROC to avoid confusion and potential bottlenecks. Establishing specific timelines and criteria for the JRPB's review of dissenting opinions will also be important [Mitigation based on principles of efficient process design and organizational structure].

An increased emphasis on early collaboration among all relevant stakeholders, including the military services, Combatant Commands, and the acquisition community, during the requirements generation process could help to build consensus and address potential issues before formal JROC review. Strengthening the Capabilities Based Assessment (CBA) process, which forms the foundation for identifying capability gaps and potential solutions, could ensure that requirements are well-justified and aligned with strategic needs from the outset⁴.

Maintaining transparency and open communication channels between JROC, the JRPB, the military services, Congress, and other stakeholders will be essential to ensure that the rationale behind requirements and the outcomes of the review process are clearly understood. Regular reporting on the performance of the revised process will also be important for maintaining accountability and allowing for adjustments as needed [Mitigation based on principles of good governance and stakeholder engagement].

Finally, the Department of Defense should establish a mechanism for periodically reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of the amended JROC responsibilities and the overall joint requirements process. This ongoing evaluation will allow for the identification of any unintended consequences and the implementation of further adjustments to ensure the process meets its intended goals of efficiency and effectiveness while maintaining necessary rigor and oversight [Mitigation based on principles of adaptive management and continuous improvement].

DoD Personnel Most Affected

Personnel within the Joint Staff (J8), particularly those directly supporting the JROC, will be significantly affected by these amendments. Their responsibilities will likely shift from managing formal validation and approval processes to conducting more in-depth reviews and analyses of joint capability requirements. This will likely require them to develop new review criteria and potentially incorporate different types of technical and operational expertise into their processes to compensate for the removal of formal validation authority [Impact based on the need to maintain rigor].

Program Managers preparing Initial Capabilities Documents (ICDs) and Capability Development Documents (CDDs) will also be directly impacted. They will need to ensure their documentation is even more comprehensive, well-justified, and analytically rigorous, as it will now undergo review rather than formal validation by the JROC. Understanding the specific criteria and expectations for the JROC review process will be crucial for Program Managers [Impact based on the need to align with new procedures]. The timeline for requirements review might also be affected, potentially impacting program schedules.

Acquisition professionals involved in requirements generation and analysis across the military services and defense agencies will need to thoroughly understand the key changes in JROC's roles and authorities to ensure their work aligns with the revised process. They may need to adjust their interactions with JROC and the JRPB based on the new procedures for handling requirements and dissenting views [Impact based on

procedural changes].

Service Requirements Officers, responsible for formulating and submitting joint requirements from their respective military services, will need to understand the implications of the JROC's reduced authority and the potentially increased role of the JRPB. They may need to adapt their strategies for advocating for service-specific needs within the joint requirements framework [Impact based on potential shifts in influence].

Stakeholders opposed and rationale for Opposition

Individual military services might have varied reactions to these amendments. Services that have historically relied on JROC's formal validation to prioritize and secure funding for their key programs might oppose the changes, fearing a loss of leverage in the acquisition process. Conversely, services that have sometimes felt constrained by JROC's oversight might cautiously support the streamlining, but could oppose the changes if they believe it will lead to less effective joint capabilities.

Specific functional areas within the Department of Defense, such as cyber, space, or intelligence, that have benefited from strong JROC advocacy for joint requirements in their domains might oppose the amendments if they believe it will lead to less emphasis on these critical areas.

Think tanks and advocacy groups focused on defense reform might have differing opinions depending on their views on centralized versus decentralized control in defense acquisition. Some might support the amendments as a move towards greater efficiency, while others might express concerns about a weakening of oversight.

Members of Congress with oversight responsibilities, particularly those on the Armed Services Committees, might also express concerns about the potential for reduced oversight of defense spending and the effectiveness of joint capabilities if JROC's authority is diminished⁵. They might also be concerned about the new process for handling dissenting views and whether it adequately protects against flawed requirements.

Additional Resources

The Department of Defense will likely require additional personnel with expertise in requirements review and analysis to effectively support the JROC's revised role, particularly within the Joint Staff (J8) and potentially the JRPB. This could include individuals with backgrounds in operational analysis, cost estimation, and technical

evaluation.

Updated training programs and comprehensive guidance documents will be necessary to educate relevant personnel across the DoD on the changes to JROC's responsibilities, the new role of the JRPB, and the revised requirements process. Revisions to the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS) manual will be essential ⁶.

Modifications to existing IT systems, such as the Joint Staff's Knowledge Management and Decision Support (KM/DS) system, might be needed to reflect the revised review process and track relevant data ⁶. The development or acquisition of new analytical tools to support the enhanced review and analysis activities might also be required [Potential resource need for improved analytical capabilities].

The Department of Defense might also consider engaging external consultants or subject matter experts with experience in organizational change management and defense acquisition reform to assist with the implementation of these significant changes [Potential resource need for specialized expertise].

Measures of Success

The efficiency of the joint requirements process after the implementation of the amendments can be measured by tracking the time taken for requirements to move through the revised review process compared to historical data ⁶. Stakeholder surveys can also provide valuable qualitative feedback on the perceived efficiency and responsiveness of the new process [Qualitative measure of efficiency].

The effectiveness of the revised process in ensuring that joint requirements align with strategic priorities and address actual capability gaps can be assessed through qualitative analysis by senior leaders and by tracking the number of reviewed requirements that are subsequently incorporated into acquisition programs aligned with the National Defense Strategy ⁴.

The quality and completeness of ICDs and CDDs submitted for review can be evaluated based on established standards and through feedback from JROC members and Joint Staff reviewers [Qualitative measure of documentation quality].

Regular surveys of Program Managers, acquisition professionals, and service requirements officers can gauge their understanding and satisfaction with the new process [Qualitative measure of stakeholder satisfaction].

Ultimately, the success of the amendments should be measured by their impact on the development and fielding of effective joint military capabilities that meet the evolving needs of the Department of Defense [Overall outcome measure]. This can be assessed through analysis of acquisition program outcomes, operational readiness reports, and feedback from Combatant Commands [Qualitative and quantitative measures of capability development].

Alternative approaches

Instead of a fundamental shift in JROC's authority, targeted reforms to the existing validation and approval processes could be implemented to improve efficiency, such as streamlining documentation requirements or establishing clearer timelines [Alternative to a complete overhaul].

Empowering the Functional Capabilities Boards (FCBs) with conditional authority to validate certain types of joint requirements could also be considered, leveraging their specialized expertise ⁴.

Investing in and implementing more rigorous analytical tools and methodologies earlier in the requirements generation process, particularly during the Capabilities Based Assessment (CBA) phase, could enhance the quality of requirements and potentially reduce the perceived need for formal JROC validation [Alternative approach to ensuring rigor].

A phased implementation of the amendments, with ongoing evaluation and adjustments based on real-world experience and stakeholder feedback, could mitigate some of the risks associated with a complete and immediate overhaul [Alternative implementation strategy].

Section Specific Question 1: How have the recent amendments to the JROC changed the process or timeline for validating joint capability requirements, and what are the direct implications for Program Managers preparing documentation like the Initial Capabilities Document (ICD) or Capability Development Document (CDD)?

The recent amendments have eliminated the JROC's authority to "validate" joint capability requirements, replacing it with the authority to "review" them. This fundamental change means that the formal JROC validation step, which previously served as a key milestone in the requirements process, has been removed. Consequently, the specific timeline associated with JROC validation will no longer exist.

For Program Managers, this shift has direct implications for how they prepare documentation. They will no longer be aiming for formal JROC "validation" of their ICDs and CDDs. Instead, their objective will be to prepare these documents for JROC "review." This likely necessitates a greater emphasis on providing comprehensive justification, robust analysis, and clear articulation of the operational need, technical feasibility, and strategic alignment of their proposed capabilities. As the formal validation step by JROC is removed, the documentation itself will need to be more self-contained and persuasive in making the case for the requirement [Implication for documentation content]. While the elimination of the formal validation step might suggest a potential shortening of the overall JCIDS timeline, the actual impact will depend on the efficiency of the new review process and the role that the JRPB plays in this revised framework [Potential impact on overall timeline]. Program Managers will need to stay informed about the specific criteria and expectations that JROC will employ during its reviews to ensure their documentation effectively addresses these aspects [Need for updated guidance].

Section Specific Question 2: What are the key changes in JROC roles or authorities that acquisition professionals involved in requirements generation and analysis need to understand?

Acquisition professionals involved in requirements generation and analysis must understand several key changes in the JROC's roles and authorities resulting from these amendments. Firstly, the JROC has lost its authority to "approve" joint requirements. This means that acquisition professionals will need to identify the new authority responsible for final approval of joint capabilities.

Secondly, and perhaps most significantly, the JROC's core function concerning joint requirements has shifted from "validate" to "review". This signifies a less formal and potentially less stringent level of scrutiny. Acquisition professionals will need to adapt their understanding of what is required for a successful JROC engagement, focusing on providing comprehensive information to support a review rather than meeting the more demanding criteria of a formal validation.

Thirdly, a new process has been established for handling dissenting views within the JROC. Acquisition professionals should be aware that any dissenting opinion from a JROC member will now require the member to first seek concurrence from the Joint Requirements and Programming Board (JRPB) before the dissent can be formally presented to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This new step could impact how disagreements are raised, discussed, and ultimately resolved within the

requirements process.

Finally, acquisition professionals involved in defining performance requirements should note the elimination of the specific exception for performance requirements previously mentioned in subsection (e) of Section 181 of Title 10. They should understand if this technical amendment has any practical implications for how performance requirements are treated during the JROC review process.

Summary

The proposed amendments in Section 202 of the FoRGED Act represent a significant shift in the responsibilities of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC), moving it from a body with approval and validation authority to one focused on review and strategic guidance. This change is intended to streamline the defense acquisition process and potentially enhance strategic oversight. However, it also introduces potential risks related to weakened oversight and the possibility of service-centric requirements. The Department of Defense will need to implement mitigation strategies, including strengthening internal review processes and clearly defining the role of the JRPB, to address these risks. The amendments will directly impact personnel within the Joint Staff, Program Managers, and acquisition professionals, requiring them to adapt to the new review-focused role of the JROC. Stakeholder opposition might arise from concerns about reduced rigor and accountability. Successful implementation will necessitate additional resources, including skilled personnel, updated training, and potentially modifications to IT systems. Measures of success will focus on the efficiency of the revised process, its alignment with strategic priorities, the quality of requirements documentation, stakeholder satisfaction, and the ultimate impact on joint capability development. Alternative approaches could involve targeted reforms, empowering FCBs, or a phased implementation. Acquisition professionals must thoroughly understand the changes in JROC's authority, particularly the shift to a review role and the new process for dissenting views, to navigate the revised joint requirements process effectively.

Table 1: Comparison of JROC Responsibilities Before and After Section 202 Amendments

JROC Responsibility (Before Amendment -	JROC Responsibility After Amendment
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Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 181(b))	(Section 202 of S. 5618)
Identifying, assessing, and validating joint military requirements	Identifying and assessing joint military requirements
Establishing and approving joint performance requirements	Establishing joint performance requirements
Considering alternatives to proposed acquisition programs	Considering alternatives to proposed acquisition programs
Ensuring consideration of trade-offs among cost, schedule, and performance objectives	Ensuring consideration of trade-offs among cost, schedule, and performance objectives
Assigning priority among joint military requirements	Assigning priority among joint military requirements
Approving joint military requirements	(Authority Removed)
Validating joint requirements	Reviewing joint requirements

Table 2: Potential Negative Impacts and Proposed Mitigations

Potential Negative Impact	Proposed Mitigation Strategy
Weakened Oversight and Reduced Rigor	Strengthening internal review processes within the Joint Staff (J8), developing more detailed review criteria, and incorporating independent expertise.
Potential for Service-Centric Requirements	Increased emphasis on early collaboration among stakeholders and a robust Capabilities Based Assessment (CBA) process to ensure alignment with joint needs.
Stifled Dissenting Views and Groupthink	Establishing clear guidelines and procedures

	for the JRPB's role in reviewing dissenting opinions to ensure they are given due consideration.
Ambiguity in Roles and Responsibilities	Clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the JROC and the JRPB in the revised requirements process and communicating these roles effectively.
Diminished Influence of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff	Maintaining transparency and open communication about the rationale and outcomes of the revised process to ensure the continued relevance and impact of joint military advice.

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