

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

Subcommittee on Personnel

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVING TESTIMONY ON
MILITARY PERSONNEL POSTURE IN REVIEW OF
THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR
FISCAL YEAR 2017 AND THE FUTURE YEARS
DEFENSE PROGRAM

Tuesday, March 8, 2016

Washington, D.C.

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3 YEAR 2017 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

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U.S. Senate

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Subcommittee on Personnel

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Committee on Armed Services

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Washington, D.C.

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The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:40 p.m.

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in Room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. Lindsey O.

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Graham, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

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Subcommittee Members Present: Senators Graham

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[presiding], Wicker, Tillis, Sullivan, Gillibrand,

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Blumenthal, and King.

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1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. LINDSEY O. GRAHAM, U.S.
2 SENATOR FROM SOUTH CAROLINA

3 Senator Graham: The committee meets this afternoon to
4 review the military personnel defense authorization request
5 for fiscal year 2017 and future years defense programs.

6 We are fortunate to have two panels of distinguished
7 witnesses joining us today. On the first panel, we have
8 Lieutenant General McConville, Vice Admiral Moran,
9 Lieutenant General Brilakis, and Lieutenant General Grasso.
10 On the second panel, we have Ms. Kathy Douquet, Chief
11 Executive Officer of Blue Star Families; Ms. Joyce Raezer,
12 Executive Director of the National Military Family
13 Association; Mr. Scott Bousum, Legislative Director of The
14 Enlisted Association of the Nation Guard of the United
15 States; Mr. Joseph Davis, Public Affairs Director of the
16 Veterans of Foreign Wars.

17 As we consider this year's military personnel defense
18 authorization request, we must continue to ask ourselves
19 what impact these authorizations and requested changes in
20 policy will have on our service members and their families.
21 We must also balance that with the reality of sequestration
22 and the need to preserve the readiness of our armed forces.

23 This subcommittee is primarily concerned with
24 modernizing the military health care system this year. As I
25 have stated publicly many times, our goal is to reform the

1 health care system to deliver higher-quality care, to
2 improve access to high-quality providers, and to ensure a
3 strong focus on combat casualty care. I hope that both
4 panels of witnesses today will address military health care
5 reform.

6 In the last year's NDAA, this committee, along with our
7 House colleagues, acted upon recommendations of the
8 Independent Military Compensation and Retirement
9 Modernization Commission. The reforms made will vastly
10 expand the military retirement benefits to reach more of
11 those who served. We owe it to those members to reward them
12 for their service to this Nation.

13 To this point, I find it particularly concerning that
14 the Department of Defense has proposed legislation that
15 would dramatically decrease the number of service members
16 who are eligible for the thrift savings plan contributions
17 from the government. It was an intentional choice by this
18 committee to set eligibility to 2 years and 1 day of
19 service. The Department came over last year and asked us to
20 modify that by pushing the eligibility date further into a
21 service member's career. We unanimously rejected that call
22 last year, and we will continue to reject requests from the
23 Department of Defense that would delay government
24 contributions until 5 years of service. We believe that the
25 new retirement system should benefit more service members.

1 Let me be clear. It is our commitment to the many service
2 members who go out on deployment before reaching their fifth
3 year of service that they too have earned some retirement.

4 I am also concerned that the Department's proposal that
5 would continue to suppress military pay raises misses the
6 mark. For the last 3 years, this administration has failed
7 to allow service members' pay to keep up with the private
8 sector wage growth. This is the fourth year in a row where
9 the Department is shortchanging service members. The
10 personnel budget came over to us as neutral. This means
11 that savings the Department took from giving a lower pay
12 raise and delaying government retirement contributions went
13 to other benefits within the personnel budget. This money
14 did not go to readiness. Instead, this money went to pay
15 the costly fringe benefits as part of the focus of the
16 future.

17 To all the witnesses, I hope today you will tell us
18 what we can do to make your job more efficient, better serve
19 those under your care, and find a way to make health care
20 not only of a higher quality but sustainable in terms of
21 cost.

22 With that, I will turn it over to the ranking member,
23 Senator Gillibrand.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, U.S. SENATOR
2 FROM NEW YORK

3 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I join
4 with you today in welcoming our witnesses to review the
5 Department's fiscal year 2017 budget request.

6 As we begin our review of DOD's budget and programs, I
7 applaud the Department's progress in opening all service
8 positions, including combat positions, to women. I believe
9 this change will strengthen our military over time because
10 it will provide access to the full spectrum of talent
11 available for military service by allowing anyone, man or
12 woman, who can meet the standard for service to compete for
13 those positions.

14 It is important that we now turn our full attention to
15 successful implementation of this change, and I look forward
16 to hearing from our witnesses about their plans to achieve
17 success in this area.

18 I am also committed to making our military justice
19 system the best in the world, and I would be interested to
20 hear specifically from the Navy regarding the changes that
21 have been made to create a specialized career track for
22 litigators. Specifically, how has this specialized training
23 improved litigation on sexual assault cases?

24 I continue to be concerned about how we support
25 families with children and other dependents with special

1 needs such as children with autism and other developmental
2 difficulties. I am concerned about the availability of
3 support services for these families, how they are assigned,
4 what happens to the family when the member deploys, and
5 whether these programs are fully funded in the budget. I
6 would like to hear more about each service handles this very
7 vulnerable population and in what ways this subcommittee
8 might be helpful.

9 Finally, I understand the Department will again propose
10 measures to slow growth of personnel costs, including health
11 care, within the Department. I remain concerned, as I was
12 the last 2 years, about the cumulative impact these
13 proposals have on the most vulnerable service members, our
14 junior enlisted and their families. I would like to hear
15 the witnesses' views as to whether the services can continue
16 to recruit and retain America's very best for military
17 service with the benefits package they would provide under
18 this budget, especially in light of an ever-improving
19 civilian economy. Recruiting talented individuals for
20 service and retaining them and their families is the
21 ultimate test of the fairness and adequacy of our military
22 compensation system. I believe that policies that support
23 military families will ensure we are able to attract and
24 retain the best individuals for our armed forces.

25 Again, I thank our witnesses, and I look forward to

1 your testimony.

2 Thank you, Senator Graham.

3 Senator Graham: Thank you very much.

4 General McConville?

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1 STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAMES C. McCONVILLE,
2 USA, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR PERSONNEL, UNITED STATES ARMY

3 General McConville: Thank you, sir. Chairman Graham,
4 Ranking Member Gillibrand, distinguished members of this
5 committee, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before
6 you on behalf of the United States Army. I have submitted a
7 statement for the record and would like to highlight a few
8 points from it, if I could, now.

9 The Army's people and our soldiers, civilians,
10 families, retirees, and veterans are our greatest asset. We
11 are the most formidable ground combat force on earth, and we
12 must stay that way.

13 Readiness is our number one priority, and manning the
14 Army is the key component of readiness. As the Army draws
15 down from 2010 wartime high of 1.13 million soldiers to
16 980,000 soldiers by 2018, we will have the smallest active
17 Army end strength since before World War II.

18 Commensurate with the military drawdown, we are also
19 drawing down our civilian workforce. With an active force
20 this size, we must sustain the highest quality force
21 possible. The drawdown we are executing is performance-
22 based, and we have done everything we can to deal with our
23 soldiers with the utmost compassion and care and remain
24 committed to our soldiers, give them the benefits they have
25 earned and the respect they deserve as soldiers for life.

1 As the G1 of the Army and the father of three soldiers,
2 I take this responsibility very seriously. It breaks my
3 heart that we have to involuntarily separate soldiers who
4 have served so honorably during this time of conflict.

5 And while we are doing the drawdown, we also need to
6 shape the future force. We still need to recruit resilient
7 and fit soldiers of character. We must also continue to
8 retain the most talented soldiers and noncommissioned
9 officers who have the experience and skills that we need to
10 meet our future needs.

11 To build this high quality Army that is trained and
12 ready, we must leverage all the available talent to ensure
13 every individual can get on the field and play their
14 position both home and away.

15 To accomplish this, we are moving from an industrial
16 age personnel management system to a modern talent
17 management system that will fundamentally change the way we
18 manage all three components called IPPS-A.

19 Diversity is important to our Army. Through our
20 outreach and marketing efforts, we have focused on
21 increasing diversity of the force in under-represented
22 branches and occupations. We are committed to giving all
23 soldiers who can meet the standards of military occupation
24 specialty the opportunity to serve in that specialty.
25 Opening all the military occupations provides increased

1 opportunities for our women and increases the talent pool
2 for the Army.

3 We are focused on personal resiliency, sexual
4 harassment and assault response and prevention, and suicide
5 prevention and we remain fully committed in all these areas.

6 Additionally, we are helping our soldiers who are
7 transitioning out of the military find quality employment.
8 We consider all soldiers soldiers for life, and we believe
9 they deserve our sincere gratitude for their enduring
10 recognition of their service. Today's soldiers will not
11 only influence the next generation of young people to join
12 the Army but will connect communities across the Nation with
13 this Army.

14 So at the end of the day, the Army is people. The men
15 and women who serve our Nation today, along with their
16 families, and all those who have served in the past are our
17 most important asset. As a Nation, we must ensure they have
18 the required resources they need so they are ready when we
19 ask them to fight and win our Nation's wars.

20 I thank you all for your continued support of our all-
21 volunteer Army. I look forward to your questions.

22 [The prepared statement of General McConville follows:]

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1 Senator Graham: Admiral?
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1 STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL WILLIAM F. MORAN, USN, DEPUTY
2 CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS FOR MANPOWER, PERSONNEL, TRAINING,
3 AND EDUCATION, UNITED STATES NAVY

4 Admiral Moran: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member
5 Gillibrand, Senator King. It is great to be here this
6 afternoon, and I am honored to represent the over 600,000
7 men and women of our U.S. Navy, active, Reserve, and Navy
8 civilians.

9 Over the years, your stalwart support on behalf of them
10 and their families has had a profound effect on the health
11 of our force today. It is a diverse, strong force, blessed
12 with unparalleled talent and selfless commitment to serve.

13 But there are reasons to pay very close attention to
14 potential challenges and risks ahead for all of us. An
15 unpredictable economy, a declining veteran population, a
16 legacy personnel system, and growing competition for high-
17 tech schools threaten our future. So we need to consider
18 every dimension of our operating environment in order to
19 reduce the risk to replenishing our workforce with very
20 high-quality people.

21 Fortunately, our current healthy manning in the fleet
22 has given us an opportunity to boldly look to transform our
23 personnel system and set the table for the next 30 years in
24 the Navy. Its policies, analytic tools, and supporting
25 infrastructure will hold us back unless we upgrade this

1 system. And our workforce is anxious for this change. They
2 expect greater transparency and responsiveness, and they
3 expect a system that speaks to them.

4 So we are on a path to modernize and have begun setting
5 the conditions to match their expectations. Sailors who are
6 driven by tenacity, consumed with passion for excellence and
7 the will to win, who understand and appreciate that there is
8 no better place to be and no more rewarding life to live
9 than to serve -- that is who builds a great Navy. And that
10 is the Navy we have and the Navy we intend to keep. As
11 military professionals, we have a covenant with our sailors
12 and the American people to do nothing less.

13 I really appreciate the opportunity to be here, Mr.
14 Chairman. I look forward to your questions.

15 [The prepared statement of Admiral Moran follows:]

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1 STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL MARK A. BRILAKIS, USMC,
2 DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS, UNITED
3 STATES MARINE CORPS

4 General Brilakis: Chairman King -- excuse me --
5 Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Gillibrand, Senator King --
6 sir, I just did not want to leave you out.

7 [Laughter.]

8 General Brilakis: It is my privilege to appear before
9 you today to discuss your marines. Marines are the
10 foundation of the Marine Corps. They are the Corps' most
11 sacred resource and always will be. Marines are recruited,
12 educated, trained, and retained in order to answer the
13 Nation's call to fight and to win. Everything we do in the
14 Marine Corps must contribute to their readiness and combat
15 effectiveness.

16 The Marine Corps is in the final year of our drawdown.
17 We have accomplished this drawdown primarily using voluntary
18 separation authorities, and we appreciate the support of
19 Congress and especially this subcommittee for those
20 flexibilities that you have given us.

21 Overall, recruiting and retention are strong. We are
22 bringing in and keeping young men and women of character
23 whose past service and future potential makes the Corps
24 stronger.

25 These marines are supported by our civilian workforce,

1 approximately 95 percent of whom do not work in Washington.
2 They work on our bases, stations, depots, and installations.
3 They serve alongside our marines throughout the world in
4 every occupation and at every level. Our civilians have
5 truly showed themselves to be semper fidelis as they keep
6 our marines and their families forefront in their actions
7 and efforts. For that they have my personal admiration.

8 It is imperative that we continue to keep faith with
9 our military and civilian workforce, else we risk losing
10 enormously talented and dedicated professionals. By
11 ensuring that we take care of all marines and their families
12 and our civilian personnel, we fulfill our responsibility to
13 keep faith with the honor, courage, and commitment they have
14 given to this Nation.

15 Thank you very much for the opportunity to present this
16 testimony. I look forward to answering your questions.

17 [The prepared statement of General Brilakis follows:]

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1 STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL GINA M. GROSSO, USAF,
2 DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MANPOWER, PERSONNEL, AND SERVICES,
3 UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

4 General Grosso: Chairman Graham, Ranking Member
5 Gillibrand, Senator King, it is my honor as well to appear
6 before you today representing our total force airmen and
7 their families.

8 As airmen, our purpose is to ensure the Air Force can
9 always provide America with global reach, global vigilance,
10 and global power. However, 25 years of continuous combat
11 operations, coupled with budget instability, and lower-than-
12 planned top lines have made the Air Force one of the
13 smallest, oldest, and least ready forces in its history.

14 Despite all of this, our Air Force is powered by airmen
15 with more talent and education than ever before. Today the
16 660,000 active duty, Guard, Reserve, and civilian airmen are
17 a highly trained, experienced, and battle-tested force,
18 standing as vanguards of freedom around the world.

19 As you are aware, our Secretary and Chief's top
20 priority is taking care of airmen and their families.
21 Airmen and their families are without question our most
22 important resource, and our budget reflects this truth.

23 You are also aware that we have been downsizing in our
24 Air Force for years, but this budget stops that decline and
25 begins to upsize our total force to address a number of key

1 areas, including critical career fields like nuclear,
2 intelligence, cyber, maintenance, remotely piloted aircraft,
3 and support officers.

4 We want to thank this committee for supporting our
5 active duty plus-up, which is going to go roughly from
6 311,000 to 317,000 airmen by the end of this fiscal year.
7 Given our current operations tempo, we certainly cannot sink
8 below this number, and we believe that the mission demands
9 will indicate that we need even more growth in fiscal year
10 2017.

11 The Air Force is committed to improving readiness by
12 growing the force, and as such, the fiscal year 2017 budget
13 funds increased accessions and expanded retention programs,
14 invests in the student training pipeline and adds technical
15 training resources, incentivizes retention of critical
16 skills in undermanned specialties, maximizes total force
17 airmen to meet mission demands, and most importantly, takes
18 care of airmen and their families.

19 As we continue to rely on the all-volunteer force, we
20 will make every effort to leverage the diverse talent from
21 across our Nation. We want the men and women of this Nation
22 to see the Air Force as an employer of choice where there
23 are no artificial barriers to their success.

24 This is best illustrated in opening all of the
25 remaining closed career fields to women, reinforcing our

1 values that if you meet the requirements, you will have the
2 opportunity to serve in any position.

3 In closing, thank you for your time today and your
4 tremendous support and concern for our Nation's airmen. I
5 look forward to your questions.

6 [The prepared statement of General Grosso follows:]

7 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Graham: Well, thank you all for your service.

2 I will start with the Army. What percentage of the
3 Army's budget is personnel?

4 General McConville: Senator, it is about 60 percent
5 with military and civilian personnel.

6 Senator Graham: Admiral?

7 Admiral Moran: Senator, it is roughly the same when
8 you include all the personnel, the whole team.

9 Senator Graham: The Marines?

10 General Brilakis: Sir, it is 69 percent. That is
11 civilian and military.

12 Senator Graham: Air Force?

13 General Grosso: Approximately 50 percent.

14 Senator Graham: So if we are going to do other things,
15 you know, half your budget plus is going to personnel costs.

16 There is a debate going on about whether women should
17 be subject to the draft now that we have opened up military
18 occupations to women. Could you please very briefly share
19 your view as to whether or not you think that is a good
20 idea?

21 General McConville: Well, I think, as you know, we
22 have opened up all combat positions to women, and I think
23 they should have the opportunity to serve in whatever
24 position they want. The fact that they can serve in combat,
25 they ought to be eligible for the draft.

1 Senator Graham: We will just let everybody know that
2 because you are drafted does not mean you go into combat.
3 You got to meet the standards.

4 General McConville: Yes, sir, absolutely.

5 Admiral Moran: I would agree, Senator, to be
6 consistent in a message to everyone in America that wants to
7 serve, Selective Service in my personal opinion is
8 appropriate.

9 Senator Graham: General?

10 General Brilakis: Mr. Chairman, thank you for the
11 question.

12 You know, it has been interesting -- this discussion
13 that has been going on. So the question really is the
14 Selective Service Act I think in terms of threats to the
15 Nation, threats to the republic and what it does and what it
16 represents, and whether or not this is an issue about women
17 and whether we add women now that we made this decision to
18 include them in combat roles, or whether it is a larger
19 discussion about the Selective Service Act and what it means
20 to the Nation.

21 I am a planner by nature, and if I have a plan, is that
22 plan holistic enough to survive first contact to provide the
23 Nation the talent it needs in time of crisis without an
24 extended debate. The Selective Service Act should help to
25 allow us to act quickly.

1 Senator Gillibrand: So yes or no?

2 Senator Graham: Yes. Yes or no.

3 General Brilakis: I believe in that discussion, all
4 Americans have the responsibility to serve the Nation.

5 Senator Gillibrand: Good.

6 General Grosso: Yes. Women should be included in the
7 Selective Service Act.

8 Senator Graham: There you go.

9 If you are going to change TRICARE, one, does it need
10 to be changed, and what would be the biggest recommendation
11 you could give us?

12 General McConville: Senator, I think everything should
13 be on the table as you talked about with the costs going up.
14 Having commanded the 101st Airborne Division in combat, I
15 understand what it takes to have a highly trained unit that
16 has got to be manned, it has got to be equipped, and it has
17 got to be trained. We have to spend money on that, and
18 there is not enough money to go around. So we need to look
19 at every place, and TRICARE is one of those to see where we
20 can more efficiently effective so we can continue to man our
21 force, equipped and training our force.

22 Senator Graham: Does anybody know off the top of their
23 head what percentage of DOD's budget in the next decade will
24 go to TRICARE or health care?

25 General McConville: Not off the top of my head.

1 Senator Graham: Admiral?

2 Admiral Moran: Sir, I would say that we need to
3 simplify, and that is part of the proposal that we are
4 seeing, to simplify the plan and reduce the administrative
5 --

6 Senator Graham: How about expand the number of people
7 service members can go to and their families? Expand the
8 network.

9 Admiral Moran: Expand the network. We are trying to
10 drive more business back into the MTFs so that we can keep
11 our readiness of our professionals. I think that is the
12 direction we need to continue, and that will help reduce
13 costs because we are not paying outside the network.

14 Senator Graham: Got you.

15 General Brilakis: Sir, I agree with Admiral Moran that
16 leveraging the existing infrastructure that we have to the
17 maximum extent to drive down costs is going to be
18 fundamental to the overall TRICARE solution set. But we
19 want to make sure that we continue to provide our families
20 and our marines, soldiers, sailors, and airmen high-quality
21 health care around the globe and in the many different areas
22 in the country where they serve.

23 General Grosso: I too agree that we need to get as
24 many beneficiaries into the traditional military treatment
25 facilities as we can and to use the traditional pharmacy

1 that the military provides to better leverage that capacity.

2 Senator Graham: When it comes to combating sexual
3 assault and putting an emphasis on preventing this, how
4 would you rate the efforts in each service?

5 General McConville: Well, Senator, I would like to
6 answer this as a parent. I am a parent of three children.
7 And I expect and my wife demands that we provide a safe and
8 secure environment for our children. And so I would say we
9 put a tremendous amount of resources into getting at this is
10 something we --

11 Senator Graham: Do you think people are getting the
12 message?

13 General McConville: I do. I really do. I think
14 people are getting it, but I think we need to continue to
15 work. One of the things we have put in place and we got
16 feedback from our surveys is a "not in my squad" program.
17 And every year we have 120,000 soldiers come in the Army.
18 Those 120,000 soldiers come with the values they brought out
19 and they live in things called squads. And so I think it is
20 extremely important, not just from the top down, but from
21 the bottom up to get after this and change culture because
22 it is something we just cannot have in our military.

23 Senator Graham: Briefly, does anybody -- does everyone
24 kind of agree with that assessment?

25 Admiral Moran: Yes, sir.

1 Senator Graham: Is it going in the right direction in
2 the Navy?

3 Admiral Moran: I think our response is better than our
4 prevention, and we are getting better at prevention and we
5 are really focused on it this year. The CNO has added some
6 new initiatives that I would be happy to talk about. But,
7 yes, sir, I believe we are.

8 General Brilakis: Sir, we cannot ever be satisfied
9 with where we are at with respect to sexual assault and
10 response to it, but I do believe that we have included all
11 marines into the final solution and we are understanding the
12 problem much better than we did before.

13 General Grosso: I would agree with that. I think we
14 really turned our focus now to what is primary prevention
15 and what can we learn from the people who do that best. And
16 we have funded positions at every installation that are
17 primary prevention experts, and we are developing a strategy
18 that deals with interpersonal violence because when you look
19 at the risk factors, the protected factors and the risk
20 factors for suicide, sexual assault, family violence, and
21 actually workplace violence, they overlap. So we are trying
22 to leverage all of these separate programs to better address
23 these negative, destructive behaviors.

24 Senator Graham: Senator Gillibrand?

25 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. I am going to continue

1 where Senator Graham left off.

2 So I want to talk a little bit about implementation for
3 sexual assault, specifically the Navy. You have done some
4 interesting work in terms of creating a complex litigation
5 track for counselors to specialize in litigating serious
6 offenses, including cases of sexual assault. Could you talk
7 a little bit about that? Because I think it is probably one
8 of the best strategies I have heard in terms of getting
9 performance in actually prosecuting these cases, getting
10 more cases to conviction, more cases to have an appropriate
11 penalty, not just non-judicial punishment, but something
12 that fits the crime of rape. Could you talk a little bit
13 about that?

14 Admiral Moran: Senator, I can talk a little bit about
15 it. I am a little bit out of my league in terms of being
16 not a lawyer.

17 However, you are correct in that our AJAG put together
18 a course to help make our prosecutors better, to your point,
19 to make they understood how to apply the law and really keep
20 the pressure on the system to hold people accountable. It
21 is called the military justice litigation career track, and
22 we have also assigned qualifications to that, so official
23 quals, so that we can identify which JAG members at any
24 point in their career who have that qual can be
25 appropriately distributed around the fleet, fleet

1 concentration areas, so that they can be assigned to those
2 cases. And it will kind of solidify around those expert
3 prosecutors so that we are consistent in how we deal with
4 each case.

5 Senator Gillibrand: And do you apply this just for
6 general court martials if you also apply it for special
7 court martials? Do you know?

8 Admiral Moran: I do not know. I can get that answer
9 for you.

10 [The information follows:]

11 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Gillibrand: And for the other services, I
2 would recommend you to look into this because one of the
3 challenges we have is that our services have generally
4 looked at lawyers as generalists, that we want you to be
5 good at everything so that when you are advising a general,
6 you know a little bit about everything.

7 But we have seen, when I have delved into how are these
8 cases actually prosecuted, how many convictions do you get
9 as a percentage of convictions in the civilian world, and
10 what are the penalties, we do not actually look very good
11 compared to the best prosecution offices in the country.
12 And a lot of the DA's offices do not do very well at this
13 either, but some do. And the ones that do it is because
14 they professionalize. So the Manhattan DA's office, for
15 example, is a perfect place to look for how do you
16 professionalize prosecution of tough felonies. Sexual
17 assault are some of the hardest cases in the world to
18 prosecute effectively. They are tough because you have to
19 weigh evidence in a way that is very difficult, and it is
20 just hard to prove. So when they do it well, it is because
21 they professionalize and they have career track people who
22 are focused on how do you prosecute tough felonies. So I
23 think every one of the services should work on this as a way
24 to get better results in the cases that do go forward.

25 But I would like you each to answer one question. I

1 understand you all think we are making progress. Why is the
2 retaliation rate unchanged? It is still at 62 percent. And
3 retaliation as perceived by the victim are three kinds of
4 retaliation: 30 percent peer-to-peer, 30 percent
5 administrative, 30 percent professional. So do not say it
6 all seems to be peer-to-peer because that is not the case.
7 In a third and a third, and if you combine that, that is 60,
8 it is from the commander. It is either administrative or
9 professional.

10 So I want you to talk about why is retaliation where it
11 is. Have you personally seen any prosecution of retaliation
12 in your services at all this year? And if not, why do you
13 think that is? And give me an answer on how we fix this
14 retaliation problem.

15 I liked the fact that one of you said "not in my squad"
16 because the perception of these survivors is sexual
17 harassment 60 percent of the time is from their direct
18 commander, not sexual assault, but sexual harassment. So
19 women are perceiving their unit commander to be one who is
20 creating a poor climate for them to be successful. So that
21 is a huge problem with, again, not pushing back on
22 retaliation peer-to-peer or ones coming from a commander
23 through administrative or professional. I would like your
24 comments on those.

25 General McConville: Senator, I agree with you. As we

1 looked at the report that came out, the last report, we saw
2 reporting going up, which we thought was a good thing, we
3 saw propensity coming down, but the retaliation at 62
4 percent is what we went after.

5 And really, that is why we put together a retaliation
6 strategy. We have got to get that down to the lowest
7 levels, and we have got to get it into the squads. We have
8 got to get it into the command. We have got to hold
9 commanders responsible. We have had cases of retaliation
10 reported. Commanders have taken appropriate action. I can
11 come back to you on the record for what those actual actions
12 were taken.

13 But I can tell you that is our biggest concern right
14 now. We thought we had a good path both for reporting and
15 for propensity, but to us retaliation is the area we still
16 need to get after.

17 Admiral Moran: I will just add, Senator, that all of
18 us in OSD have recognized that the data on retaliation is
19 not going in the right direction. And we have got a working
20 group. We are defining, we are setting the baseline
21 definition for retaliation because there is a lot of
22 misunderstanding about it to many folks, and then throwing
23 that and adding it into our training, which is becoming more
24 and more effective, on destructive behaviors. We have put
25 retaliation into that construct as well. And to Jim's

1 point, we have to do it at the local level. We have to
2 train peer-to-peer. We have to make sure we are talking to
3 each other and understanding the misperceptions that go
4 along with this aspect of sexual assault.

5 General Brilakis: Thanks for the question, Senator
6 Gillibrand.

7 And thanks to this subcommittee and the Congress for
8 actually bringing this to everybody's attention. There has
9 been a lot of realization into what is going on. The
10 commands themselves have taken action to publish policies to
11 identify to make their service members understand what it is
12 when we talk about retaliation or reprisal. We are
13 participating, along with the other services, in the OSD
14 working group to develop an overall SAPR retaliation set of
15 policies, understanding these definitions, et cetera. In
16 the Marine Corps, the IG and NCIS primarily are the
17 investigative arms in these cases and advise commanders on
18 the information and the prosecutorial options that are
19 available to commanders, as far as this goes. It is a
20 crime. It cannot be tolerated. And we are all taking steps
21 to make this one of those things that is knowledge in action
22 or prevalent within the services.

23 General Grosso: Senator Gillibrand, the only thing I
24 would add to that is that we are educating all leaders that
25 more than one out of every two victims that come forward

1 experience some negative outcome that they perceive as
2 negative. And I think that is very surprising when you
3 start sharing that data. So you have to be cognizant that
4 whatever you are doing -- we are not doing enough so that
5 these victims are getting the care they need. So we have
6 started doing that.

7 The other thing we have emphasized is the people that
8 the victim comes forward who they trust to be much more
9 proactive and ask how are you doing, can I help you, how is
10 your experience in the workplace going. So those people
11 that are primary caregivers and that are SARCs that do more
12 in the case management -- we want them to be more engaged
13 with the individual, knowing that more than one out of every
14 two has some negative experience, so be a little bit more
15 involved in soliciting their input and addressing it at real
16 time.

17 Senator Gillibrand: Just quickly a yes or no. Do you
18 know of any cases of retaliation being prosecuted in your
19 service? Just yes or no.

20 General McConville: I am not aware.

21 Admiral Moran: Yes.

22 General Brilakis: I do not at this time.

23 General Grosso: No.

24 Senator Gillibrand: Because I would like to follow up
25 with you on a case.

1 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Senator Graham: Senator Tillis?

3 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and my
4 compliments to the staff on cleaning up that spill. I
5 thought they were going to have to use a shop-vac. It was a
6 big one.

7 Thank you all for being here.

8 A quick question on TRICARE. The legislative proposal
9 for 2017 looks like it aims at keeping most of the
10 beneficiaries in the military hospitals and the clinics. Do
11 you agree with that? Do you think that that is the right
12 strategy? Can you explain to me why?

13 General McConville: Senator, I think, at least from a
14 military standpoint, we cannot outsource combat care, and so
15 that should be the number one priority. Having just
16 returned with the 101st Airborne in combat, we have the
17 incredible medical providers, and that is going to be the
18 number one thing to do. So we got to keep that capability
19 within our medical treatment facilities.

20 We also have an obligation to take care of our families
21 and our retirees. And that is where we need to take a look
22 at how to do that best. There are some places, medical
23 treatment facilities, where we just do not have the work to
24 keep them open. So we have got to be innovative and maybe
25 we bring them down to clinics, but we still meet the needs.

1 There are some cost savings. We can get at those things
2 while we are providing the right care. But we got to think
3 through how we do that. So some places we can do it. Other
4 places we cannot. But the overriding principle for us is
5 are we maintaining the readiness of the military, do we have
6 the right medical folks ready to go to combat if we need to
7 do that.

8 Admiral Moran: Yes, I completely agree with Jim's
9 assessment, Senator.

10 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

11 General Brilakis: I do as well, sir. Our medical
12 treatment facilities -- we have invested huge amounts of
13 money. We have got great talent in there. They have to be
14 kept up to speed. They got to learn their job. We do that
15 by ensuring a constant flow of patients. But we cannot do
16 that at the expense of our families and our service members.
17 So we have got to make sure we balance that with the things
18 that are available to those members that are outside the
19 proximity of a medical treatment facility. And so I think
20 ultimately it is a very careful balance, managing costs,
21 availability, access, and also health care.

22 General Grosso: We would agree as well. Where there
23 is availability, we would for every beneficiary go to an
24 MTF.

25 Senator Tillis: You know, one thing I would like for

1 us to do is look at as much collaboration as possible. I
2 sit on the Veterans Affairs Committee, and we are talking
3 about -- we obviously have to invest for a certain amount of
4 capacity. So in some of our facilities, we may not be at
5 capacity, but we are prepared, in the event that we need to,
6 to find some efficient way to make those resources
7 available. At times, you have other instances where maybe
8 you do not have the capacity. But I think collaboration and
9 collaboration with the private sector and the communities
10 you are embedded in -- I would like to see more of that,
11 just get more leverage out of it.

12 I do not know if Senator Gillibrand brought this up,
13 but I am kind of curious. There is one thing that we talked
14 about in a full committee a week or so ago, and it has to do
15 with cutting the reimbursement rate for treatment for
16 autism, children with autism. And it looks like we are
17 cutting that really below the national average. That could
18 be at the expense of providing treatment.

19 In your experiences, are these kinds of treatments
20 things that your military families are concerned with, and
21 do you share the view that maybe we should delay cutting the
22 reimbursement rate?

23 General McConville: Well, Senator, I know we have an
24 exceptional family member program, and a lot of our military
25 families look to that to take care of their children. I

1 know some very close to me that have children in that
2 program. So from a standpoint, I would have to look at the
3 absolute case, but I think we owe it to these families who
4 are serving in the military the care they need for their
5 kids.

6 Senator Tillis: It seems to me there is nothing more
7 we could do to help our soldiers stay focused on their
8 duties than to make sure we are taking care of their
9 families back home.

10 Admiral Moran, do you have a comment?

11 Admiral Moran: No, sir, not really other than I am
12 sure that any family -- and I have got sailors working for
13 me who have autistic kids, that if they see the benefit to
14 the treatment that their children are getting being eroded
15 through rate cuts, they are concerned. I would have to look
16 at what the exact proposal is and balance that against all
17 the other --

18 Senator Tillis: Well, I think the other thing to look
19 at -- I want to ask another question. It is on a different
20 subject. But I think the thing to look at, increasingly a
21 number of private sector companies are providing these
22 treatments. Other States are mandating the care. It could
23 ultimately become a threat to people who would otherwise
24 like to stay in the military where the financial burden is
25 such that they will go get a job where the coverages are out

1 there. It could ultimately represent a loss of good people
2 who would otherwise stick around if they had the same
3 alternative under TRICARE.

4 A completely different subject, and it has to do with
5 commissaries. Can you talk a little bit about what we can
6 do? You know, there is some discussion of privatization.
7 We know there are a lot of concerns expressed with that.
8 Can you talk about things that we can do that could
9 potentially improve efficiency and maintain costs? I think
10 that is one of the key drivers behind people's support of
11 the current plan is because they do not want to see the
12 costs go up.

13 We will start in reverse order this time.

14 General Grosso: Well, we think there a couple things,
15 and actually I think these are policy issues that they are
16 working at the OSD level. But one of them is variable
17 pricing so that they have some flexibility depending on
18 their location to maximize the price competitive with their
19 local area.

20 I think the second thing is local branding, so getting
21 a DeCA brand that has the potential to save a significant
22 amount of money.

23 Then I think the third thing would be to leverage the
24 efficiencies that the exchange services have got in the back
25 shop and learn from the exchange services to lean out the

1 business portion of the DeCA process.

2 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

3 General Brilakis: Senator Tillis, thank you very much.

4 I agree with everything that Gina just said. Variable
5 pricing, branding, et cetera, all those are limitations on
6 what they can do. We need to take a look at it as a
7 business, and if we are going to achieve efficiencies in the
8 commissary program, we need to look at it and execute it
9 that way. 100 percent APF-funded. And so the real question
10 is how do we bring that down. Our exchanges at one point
11 were that way, and now they are all NAF-funded, although I
12 do have some concerns about trying to have the exchange
13 services become combined with the commissary services.

14 DeCA needs to be brought into a more business-like
15 footing before we go to consideration about combining both
16 exchange services and commissary services because each of
17 the services do their exchanges a little bit different and
18 the result and the dollars that go to support our marines,
19 soldiers, and airmen and sailors reside and rest on our
20 ability to run our exchange services economically and
21 successfully.

22 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

24 Senator Graham: Senator King?

25 Senator King: I want to move to another subject. All

1 of you at the beginning of your testimony spoke in terms of
2 working on drawing down, on reducing force and where you are
3 in that process. And yet, the other hearing that I am
4 supposed to be at right now -- and I am going to have to
5 leave shortly -- is with Director Clapper, the Director of
6 National Intelligence, who testified before this committee
7 that in his 50 years of government service, he has never
8 seen a more complex, dangerous, and growing threat
9 environment than what we are facing today.

10 It worries me that we are doing these drawdowns based
11 upon decisions about budgets made in 2011 before ISIS,
12 before Syria, before North Korea nuclear, before the South
13 China Sea, before the Ukraine, and we are embarked on a
14 policy direction that may not comport with the reality that
15 we face.

16 General, could you comment on that?

17 General McConville: Yes, I could, Senator.

18 As you know, the Army is on a drawdown ramp to 450,000
19 soldiers. That 450,000 soldiers -- 980,000 in the total
20 force. That was based on some conditions and assumptions
21 that were made around the 2011-2012 time frame. Those
22 assumptions and conditions are changing. We are sitting
23 today at 482,000 soldiers, a little over a million in the
24 force right now. And I think as we move forward, we need to
25 take a look, if the conditions have changed, what the type

1 of things we want our Army to do and how much risk we should
2 take.

3 Senator King: And one of the things that worries me is
4 if conditions do change -- and in fact, they are changing
5 before our eyes -- and you need to ramp back up, that is not
6 a spigot you can turn on. That is an 18-month -- to stand
7 up a brigade is, I am told, 18 months to 2 years at the
8 shortest. Is that correct?

9 General McConville: That is absolutely true.

10 Senator King: Other comments on the idea that maybe we
11 have got the aircraft carrier, Admiral, going in a certain
12 direction and we need to think about changing direction.

13 Admiral Moran: Yes, sir. Senator, thanks for the
14 question.

15 You know, we have spent the last 2 or 3 years now
16 trying to reset our OPTEMPO to something sustainable, both
17 for the equipment that we have and just as importantly for
18 the people. And so the crises you talk about -- we always
19 counsel our sailors that as much as we are trying to
20 drawdown our OPTEMPO so it is more reasonable and
21 sustainable and predictable for sailors and their families,
22 the world is getting a vote.

23 Senator King: But if the threats are going up --

24 Admiral Moran: That is what I mean.

25 Senator King: -- and the people are going down, the

1 OPTEMPO is going to go up. I worry about burning people
2 out. This hearing is about personnel, and we are talking
3 about compensation and retirement. But the OPTEMPO is a big
4 factor. Is it not?

5 Admiral Moran: Absolutely.

6 Senator King: General, do you agree?

7 General Brilakis: Absolutely, Senator King.

8 In our reduction from 202,000 down to what was
9 originally 186,800 marines, which was determined to be the
10 optimal number for the size of the force, the balance of the
11 marine air ground task force, the capabilities and the
12 sustainment of rotational deployments, the OPTEMPO and
13 DEPTEMPO, we have since -- because of the price sensitivity
14 that we have, as I testified earlier, about 7 cents out of
15 every dime goes to pay for our people. So when reductions
16 pressures -- sequestration puts pressure on the top line,
17 the only way that we can pay that is a reduction in the end
18 strength. So we have gone from 186,800, which is the ideal
19 size, to 184,000, now down to 182,000 primarily due to
20 budgetary pressures.

21 Even in that determination of the 186,800 marines as
22 being that balanced force, since that time, in the last 4
23 years, these issues that you brought up, a rising Russia,
24 South China Sea concerns, additional forward presence,
25 rotational requirements, additional actions in the regional

1 areas, has put even further pressure on that. And so in the
2 readiness component, our ability to provide ready forces
3 today has been -- we are under pressure. We are already
4 above what we believe to be the sustainable number, the one
5 to --

6 Senator King: Certainly we cannot avoid -- or should
7 we avoid budgetary considerations? We all have to live
8 within budgets. The whole country does. But the driver
9 should be the demands and the threats.

10 General Brilakis: Absolutely, sir. I think we need to
11 balance the things we ask of our services to do and
12 especially in uncertain times like we have today.

13 Senator King: General, in your opening testimony, you
14 said something like this is the smallest Air Force we have
15 had in --

16 General Grosso: Yes, Senator King. And in fact, you
17 will see in our budget that is why we are growing end
18 strength. So we are through the drawdown. We are growing
19 back up to 317,000, and we absolutely believe we need more
20 for the very reasons you cited.

21 Senator King: I am running out of time. I would like
22 to ask a question for the record, if you all could supply
23 us. We made some changes last year in the retirement
24 program, and I am interested in sort of mid-course
25 discussion of how that is working. Should there be some

1 modifications to it? Is it working in the way it should? I
2 have heard a complaint that lower-level enlisted people
3 cannot make the payments or have the financial education
4 necessary to make the payments into the 401(k) that gets
5 them to their 50 percent at the end. I would just like your
6 thoughts on how that looks now from the field.

7 The other thing I would like for the record -- I had a
8 conversation this morning with the Admiral, that 84 percent
9 of his incoming recruits are from military families. My
10 question is, is that true of all of you, and is that
11 sustainable given the smaller size of the military? If that
12 is where our main recruiting pool is, we are going to have
13 to think, it seems to me, about broader recruiting.

14 So I am out of time, but I hope you could give me some
15 response to those for the record. Thank you very much.

16 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Senator Graham: Senator Wicker?

18 Senator Wicker: Well, thank you all for your service
19 and your testimony.

20 You know, Senator King's question about any changes
21 that might need to be made early, maybe not mid-course, but
22 early corrections that need to be made on this major change
23 enacted last year -- I think that is worth talking about.

24 So let me start down here with Lieutenant General
25 McConville. Has Senator King uncovered something that is a

1 concern that needs to be worked out?

2 General McConville: Well, Senator, I think there is a
3 concern when I look at the new retirement program. It has
4 great value in the fact that about 85 percent of our
5 soldiers will get some type of retirement. What we worry
6 about is our noncommissioned officers. The way the
7 retirement works is you get 40 percent at 20 years. The way
8 you make that up is by going along and saving in the thrift
9 savings program. So for most folks, the way the math works
10 out, if you max out your savings and put it in there and do
11 what you want to do and get your continuation pay, you will
12 probably be ahead at retirement age if you do that.

13 But a lot of our young soldiers live paycheck to
14 paycheck, and if they cannot start saving early, they are
15 going to have a tough time staying with the force when they
16 get to 20-25. We have some great noncommissioned officers
17 who are serving 30-32 years doing hard work, and we want to
18 make sure that they have a good retirement when they get to
19 that level.

20 Senator Wicker: We will just go on down the line here.

21 Admiral Moran: Yes, sir. Senator, there are several
22 proposals that DOD has put forward that they would like to
23 see modified. The one that is most important to me is the
24 ability to force shape at the mid-career. So this
25 continuation pay at 12 years is locked right now at 12

1 years. I believe in the Navy, in particular with our
2 growing high-tech skill requirements and our lower skill
3 requirements, we need flexibility in that 12 years.
4 Something from 8 to 14 might be more appropriate. But I can
5 get you more detail on what we think would be best for the
6 Navy. And the other proposals are interesting, but I think
7 the most important to me and the Navy is the ability to have
8 flexibility in the 12-year continuation pay proposal.

9 Senator Wicker: General Brilakis?

10 General Brilakis: Senator Wicker, thank you very much.

11 And I agree with Admiral Moran and General McConville.
12 You know, we have not begun the retirement program. It
13 begins the beginning of calendar year 2018. So we are still
14 not sure exactly what we are going to get. We are not sure
15 on the take rate because our young enlisted marines and
16 officers will have the option of whether they opt into the
17 TSP. They will have that 20-year retirement at a lower
18 rate, but if you are going to come close to what the current
19 50 percent retirement at 20 years provides, you have to
20 start doing the savings. And I think that goes to Jim's
21 earlier comment with respect to the NCOs.

22 On the continuation pay, we believe that we do need the
23 flexibility because if we are having retention issues
24 earlier, it would be one of those things that we can use to
25 increase our retention.

1 Senator Wicker: General Grasso, do you take serious
2 issue with anything that has been said, or should we move
3 along to another topic?

4 General Grosso: Continuation pay. And we would like
5 to see matching up to 30 years of service, not stopping at
6 26 because we have a significant portion of our senior NCOs
7 that serve that we need to stay in beyond 26 years.

8 Senator Wicker: Let us see. Admiral Moran, on page 18
9 of your testimony, you talk about the drug abuse policy in
10 the Navy is zero tolerance, detection, deterrence, and
11 prevention. And then you also mentioned prescription drug
12 abuse, wrongful prescription drugs. You have increased
13 detections there. We are dealing with this issue right now
14 on the floor of the Senate with regard to the general
15 population.

16 I will start with you and then ask if anybody else has
17 any thoughts about that. Do you have any suggestions for us
18 as we grapple with this issue society-wide that we might
19 learn from what you have learned specifically in the Navy,
20 sir?

21 Admiral Moran: Senator, I really appreciate this
22 question.

23 The difficulty with this problem is that it is moving
24 all the time. Prescription drugs or drugs that develop over
25 time are moving at a pace that it is not your traditional

1 illicit drugs that we are worried about so much, but it is
2 some of the other ones that come along.

3 On the prescription side, there are policies that we
4 have had that we continue to have to educate our workforce
5 about, that when an expiration of a prescription is
6 complete, you are not allowed to continue to use that once
7 or even a year later. And I see these cases all the time.
8 And there is a misunderstanding, but there is also maybe
9 some character issues with some of the folks. But most of
10 it is just a lack of understanding on both the command side
11 and the policy for the young sailors. So we are trying to
12 educate our force better to make sure we can get our arms
13 around this.

14 Senator Wicker: And you are working, obviously, with
15 your medical corps on that.

16 Admiral Moran: Absolutely. Yes, sir.

17 Senator Wicker: Anyone else want to jump in in the
18 limited time we have?

19 [No response.]

20 Senator Wicker: Thank you very much.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 Senator Graham: Anything else?

23 Senator Wicker: Well, okay. Let me make one
24 observation. I notice, Admiral Moran, you talk about
25 diversity. And I am certainly happy that you are involved

1 in that. And religious diversity within the services.

2 We have a concern, many of us, about basically
3 tolerance for it is okay to be a Christian in the service.
4 And we see some evidence in some of the publications that
5 come forward that there has been an overreaction on the part
6 of supervisors for our military personnel simply displaying
7 at their workplace an indication that they are Christians
8 and that they feel seriously about that and making that
9 statement from a personal standpoint.

10 I will not ask you to respond, but I would just say I
11 hope that we do not bend over backwards so far in the name
12 of diversity that we start trampling on the First Amendment
13 rights of our service members at whatever level to express
14 their belief in a certain religious doctrine and that we do
15 not, in the name of diversity, or some opposition to or some
16 concern that we might offend, that we do not overreact and
17 start trampling on the rights of Christian service people to
18 express themselves, just as we allow minority members to
19 express themselves.

20 And thank you for indulging me on that, Mr. Chair.

21 Senator Graham: Senator Sullivan?

22 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

23 I would like to follow up on what Senator King was
24 talking about earlier, the end strength issues. And in
25 particular, General McConville, if you do not mind, I want

1 to focus a little bit on the Army end strength.

2 So the QDR put an Army end strength at 450,000, and as
3 you know, General Milley is taking a hard look at that,
4 given the significant national security threats that we are
5 seeing globally that certainly were not really as nearly
6 apparent as Senator King mentioned when that number was
7 initially put out there as a target.

8 In the last 2 weeks -- just 2 weeks -- before this
9 committee, we have had the PACOM Commander, EUCOM Commander,
10 CENTCOM Commander, SOCOM Commander, Commander of our forces
11 in Korea, AFRICOM Commander, all expressing concerns even
12 today, this morning, three four-star Army generals at the
13 pinnacle of their career on the 450,000 number as
14 representing too high a risk for the country's national
15 security. Do you agree with that assessment?

16 General McConville: I am very concerned about 450,000.
17 I am the Chief of Personnel, and I am supposed to man the
18 force. I am manning the force right now at 482,000.

19 Senator Sullivan: And are you stretched? Do you feel
20 that you are stretched at 482,000?

21 General McConville: At 482,000, we are able to meet
22 requirements but we are stretched.

23 Senator Sullivan: And do you see any of the threats
24 and requirements due to those threats lessening in the next
25 6 months or year or 2 years or maybe even increasing?

1 General McConville: Well, if I knew, I am not sure,
2 but I think we need to be ready for the threats to increase.
3 That is the buffer we provide. You know, I said to the
4 committee I commanded the 101st Airborne Division. I have
5 been in this job 19 months now. The 101st Airborne Division
6 has deployed twice. It went to Liberia and they fought
7 Ebola, and now they just took over in Iraq. So that is the
8 OPTEMPO that our soldiers are seeing as we bring the force
9 down. Again, we are at 482,000 right now.

10 Senator Sullivan: So what should we be doing? I
11 believe there is bipartisan support on this committee to
12 relook at and increase that number. Is that something this
13 committee should be looking at, increasing the 450,000?

14 General McConville: You have had a chance for General
15 Milley to give you his assessment. He is doing posture
16 hearings right now. I think the way ahead is for him to
17 take a look at what we have, what the future looks like, do
18 assessment, see if the conditions are going to change, then
19 come back with a recommendation through the Secretary of
20 Defense for where we should go on that.

21 Senator Sullivan: And how important do you think it
22 is? It is one thing to have the Chief of Staff of the Army,
23 other members of the Army talking about this. We know that
24 sometimes services want to make sure there is significant
25 forces. But how important do you think it is that literally

1 every combatant commander -- every single combatant
2 commander -- regardless of branch of service, has come
3 before this committee saying 450,000 is going to be a too
4 substantial risk to the Nation's security? Do you think
5 that bolsters the case that the 450,000 number is too low?

6 General McConville: Well, I think as we know, the
7 combatant commanders are the ones who are going to execute
8 the mission. They are taking a look at their requirements,
9 and they are coming back and providing their best military
10 advice, and that best military advice will come in at the
11 Secretary of Defense level and they will decide how they
12 want to best allocate the resources that we have.

13 Senator Sullivan: Let me ask another question that
14 relates. I know there was a discussion of some of the
15 issues surrounding the Force of the Future, Mr. Carson's
16 focus on this. This is just a general question. Do you see
17 sometimes that the requirements from the Congress or
18 sometimes the civilian leadership sometimes forget about the
19 focus on warfighting?

20 And I am just mentioning that as someone who served in
21 the Reserves and on active duty for over 2 decades. It
22 always seems like there are new requirements that are coming
23 from somewhere for our forces to undertake in terms of
24 training. And yet, in my experience, they rarely relate to
25 the core focus of what we do in the military. In the Marine

1 Corps infantry, it is close with and destroy the enemy.

2 Do you sometimes worry -- and I am just asking all four
3 of you -- that we get that balance out of kilter to the
4 detriment of our readiness and training, particularly if
5 they are mandates coming from Congress? Or do you think
6 that right now the focus on training and the military's core
7 mission, which is to defend the country, is still the
8 priority that you are hearing from this committee or other
9 Members of Congress or other civilian leaders?

10 General Brilakis: Sir, I think it is a concern for all
11 of us on a daily basis. I do not think there is any
12 decision we make or any action that we make that is not
13 focused wholly on readiness and implications on the force
14 and how it affects us. And so Force of the Future in
15 specific in our interactions with OSD on the working groups
16 and at the executive level -- we have asked for flexibility.

17 Senator Sullivan: And were you even consulted on a lot
18 of those initiatives as the uniformed military leaders?

19 General Brilakis: Sir, we participated in a set of
20 working groups at the colonel and general officer level
21 during the course of the Force of the Future development.
22 We had the opportunity to make our concerns known. I for
23 one maintained concerns in the cost, which is not readily
24 apparent, whether it is cost in terms of opportunity cost,
25 whether is in terms of cost of dollars, the amount of time

1 that we have had to study some of these recommendations, et
2 cetera.

3 But I do believe that we will have the opportunity,
4 having submitted some implementation plans already on some
5 of the things the Secretary has already announced. The
6 starting date for some of these is in the future, and we
7 will have the opportunity to take a look at these and study
8 them, to learn the costs.

9 Most importantly I think to all of us was the
10 flexibility in the recommendations that the services, based
11 on mission, service culture, et cetera, had the ability to
12 take a look at what applied to us, what did not apply based
13 upon what we have done because, quite frankly, there are
14 things that we do as a Marine Corps that the Air Force does
15 not do right now. And the Force of the Future wanted
16 everybody to take a look at it.

17 So there are actions and activities. I do not know the
18 future costs. I do know the costs are out there, and I do
19 know in this fiscal environment, those costs may supplant
20 some of the other things that we are concerned about.

21 Senator Sullivan: Any other thoughts on that? Thanks,
22 General.

23 General Grosso: Sir, I would just add that it is
24 always about readiness today versus readiness tomorrow. So
25 if you think about it, the airmen and soldiers and sailors

1 and marines that we are bringing in today will be fighting
2 more in 20 to 25 years. So the Force of the Future actually
3 synchronized relatively closely with the Human Capital Annex
4 we wrote as part of our new master strategic plan in 2015.
5 So I do think it is important -- and General McConville
6 mentioned this -- that we modernize some of our personnel
7 practices. And Force of the Future has helped us do some of
8 that.

9 Senator Sullivan: But not at the expense of the
10 serious mission and training that is required by our
11 military.

12 General McConville: Yes, sir. What I see is it is a
13 zero sum game. So we have got to be ready. We have got to
14 be ready to fight now. In fact, we are fighting now. So it
15 is not a question, you know, are we going to fight tomorrow.
16 So we are going to fight now or we are going to fight
17 tomorrow.

18 But within the Force of the Future, there are some
19 things that are worth the cost, and I would argue the
20 integrated personnel and pay system, which is going to
21 fundamentally change the way we can manage the total force
22 -- for the first time, we will have the total force, all
23 three components, on one system. We will be able to
24 actually manage the talent management of 1 million soldiers,
25 and we will be able to meet the auditability requirements of

1 the Congress all with this system. So when I look at that,
2 that is something we absolutely want to do as we go forward.

3 Admiral Moran: Senator, I agree with Jim -- everybody
4 here really -- in terms of the value of the Force of the
5 Future is it set tension in the system of trying to
6 understand, on one hand, what should be mandated. On the
7 other hand, where we all kind of camped out was give us
8 discretionary authorities where we needed to manage our
9 forces. We are all different. Some are getting smaller.
10 Some are getting bigger. And we need different authorities
11 at different points in time. So mandates do not necessarily
12 help us.

13 Consider TERA, or the Temporary Early Retirement
14 Authority. Some of us have used it in the last 5 years.
15 Others have not seen the need. It is nice to have the
16 discretionary authority when you are trying to manage these
17 forces.

18 To your original question, though, on the burden of
19 training, I think we all enter that discussion and
20 consideration that at the end of the day, some of this
21 training is absolutely necessary so that Americans have
22 confidence in their military. And there are issues that we
23 all deal with every day that we have to balance fiscally,
24 but if we do not have the confidence of the American people
25 -- and we have tremendous confidence today. We want to keep

1 it. So that training is foremost in our mind. Much of it
2 comes from Congress, and there is a lot of it that we put on
3 ourselves that we have gone back and looked at to try to
4 reduce that burden on the fleet so we can get to your very
5 good point about are we training to war-fight. And we have
6 been challenged by that over the last 10 years.

7 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

8 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 Senator Graham: Any other questions of the panel?
10 Yes?

11 Senator Gillibrand: I am going to submit for the
12 record a line of questioning about combat integration that I
13 would like you to answer, and they are specific to each of
14 the services. Thank you.

15 Senator Sullivan: Mr. Chairman, I just had one other.

16 Each of you mentioned in your testimony -- and I
17 apologize if we have already talked about this, but the
18 initiatives that you are taking particularly with regard to
19 mental health care for uniformed members transitioning out
20 of the military. We are all on this panel very concerned,
21 as I know all of you are, on the issue of suicide. Do you
22 think that we are getting a handle on that issue? And do
23 you think that we are reducing the stigma that relates to
24 some of these mental health issues or issues that are kind
25 of related like PTSD and other issues that can lead to

1 suicide?

2 General McConville: Well, Senator, this is something
3 that is very important for the Army. We have really gone
4 after this problem. So we have done some studies. We had
5 MIT do a study because the key thing about behavioral health
6 issues is, when I look at it, people do not commit suicide.
7 They die of suicide. People do not commit heart disease.
8 They die of heart disease. So what we have to do is we have
9 to make sure they get the care and they get it early on.
10 And if there is a stigma attached to it, they are not going
11 to do it.

12 We just had a study done by MIT from 2003 to today.
13 Basically we have gone from 5 percent to 15 percent of our
14 soldiers are using behavioral health care. And we are also
15 seeing a number of soldiers that have come into the Army
16 with behavioral health challenges. That has gone down.

17 The other thing that was really key for us was putting
18 embedded behavioral health down at the brigade level. So it
19 is near the point of need. You know, the stigma was before
20 you had to go find it. You had to get to it. You had to
21 try to get an appointment. By pushing it down to where our
22 soldiers can get it early, that is when we get the best
23 results. So it is early and it is near. That is what we
24 want to do, and that is where we are going to get the best
25 results.

1 So we are starting to see some reductions. One suicide
2 is still too many, but we are starting to see some trends in
3 the right direction on that.

4 Admiral Moran: Senator, this is immensely important to
5 all of us. And I think we are learning from each other as
6 we go down this path. I am very keenly interested in what
7 the Marine Corps is doing in their Marine Intercept program.
8 They figured out that a lot of young men and women who have
9 ideations ultimately do commit suicide. It has not always
10 been well understood. We are beginning to see the data now
11 that says we have got to pay a lot closer attention to those
12 with ideations, in other words, stay with them much longer
13 through the process, and you may have to stay with them
14 forever to make sure that they feel like they are part of
15 the team and not alone and isolated. That generally is
16 where we are seeing the suicides occur in young males
17 primarily in our service.

18 General Brilakis: The issue of stigma, Senator -- it
19 is a great question. It is about talking to marines early
20 and talking to them often. It is about discussing those
21 elements and letting them know that any issue that they may
22 have that comes up, we are dealing with youngsters whose
23 maturity levels are developing, and their coping mechanisms
24 are not necessarily fully developed. And we put them in a
25 hyper-pressurized environment. And so you never want to

1 drive anybody into the shadows. You want to bring them out.
2 And so having that discussion, making them understand what
3 it is that we can do, all the resources that are available,
4 making them available in such a way that they are wearing
5 the same uniform that those individuals are, that they are
6 not wearing the same uniform, so depending upon who they
7 feel they can reach out to is important.

8 Admiral Moran mentioned the Marine Intercept program.
9 One of those things that we developed with feedback from the
10 marines, a program that once we identify an individual,
11 whether it is through an ideation, whether it is through
12 just an admission that things are rough, we put them into
13 that program. We offer them the opportunity to involve the
14 Marine Intercept program. They have the ability to opt out.
15 About 80 percent of them accept the Marine Intercept
16 program. We have 1,500 marines currently on it, and for
17 those that are involved, they have accepted it, we have not
18 to date seen one individual die from suicide. And it is a
19 grassroots effort, but it is a growing effort and we
20 continue to work those issues hard because a suicide is a
21 very complex problem, as you well know.

22 General Grosso: We have just seen our suicide rates go
23 up the last couple years, which is causing us great concern.
24 And we have taken a pause in how we are addressing it, and
25 we have actually learned from our sister services on how we

1 can get better at this. So we are putting a lot of
2 resources back into understanding why is this happening and
3 what can we do about it. And that is when we decided to,
4 again, put these prevention specialists at the installation
5 level. We also need, we believe, just like our sister
6 services, to put more resources down at the individual level
7 on the installation to help people -- make it easier for
8 them to get help basically.

9 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 Senator Graham: Anything else?

12 [No response.]

13 Senator Graham: Thank you all for your testimony.

14 We have received testimony from these witnesses and
15 others on these important topics in advance of today's
16 hearing. I move that we include all written statements
17 received by this subcommittee for today's hearing on the
18 record. Without objection, so ordered.

19 [The information follows:]

20 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Graham: Thank you all very much.

2 The next panel, please.

3 [Pause.]

4 Senator Graham: Thank you to the second panel here.

5 Now we will go ahead and get started with Ms. Roth-Douquet.

6 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Douquet.

7 Senator Graham: Douquet. I am sorry. Thank you.

8 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Thank you. It is a difficult name.

9 Senator Graham: No, a nice name.

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1 STATEMENT OF KATHY ROTH-DOUQUET, CHIEF EXECUTIVE
2 OFFICER, BLUE STAR FAMILIES

3 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Senator Graham, Senator Gillibrand,
4 I really appreciate you having us here today.

5 I am Kathy Roth-Douquet, and I am CEO of Blue Star
6 Families. Blue Star Families strengthens military families
7 and our Nation by connecting communities and fostering
8 leadership. It is the largest chapter-based military
9 families serving nonprofit in the U.S. We serve 1.5 million
10 military family members annually. We have 35 chapters at
11 home and overseas. BSF bridges the gap between our military
12 family community and the general public. We have strong
13 ties to all branches of services, including Guard and
14 Reserve, transitioning veterans, wounded service members and
15 their families.

16 We are nationally recognized for our annual Military
17 Family Lifestyle Survey. It is the largest of its kind, and
18 it provides both quantitative and qualitative data that
19 reveals a snapshot of the current military force and their
20 families and how they are experiencing service life. We
21 conduct it annually. We release it with the House and
22 Senate Military Family Caucuses, and it is used broadly by
23 the White House, Congress, DOD, State and local officials,
24 other nonprofits and foundations to help understand our
25 current military family.

1 I appreciate that you are focusing particularly on
2 health here. We understand health for the military
3 community to be broadly stated. It is both immediate issues
4 of health care and those conditions that allow families to
5 be healthy and resilient.

6 Military families are central to the security of our
7 Nation. We are doing something unprecedented. This is the
8 first time in the history of civilization that such a small
9 number of free people voluntarily patrol the globe and keep
10 it safe for everyone. Those people have families and nobody
11 should be made to choose between serving their country and
12 making sure that their family is thriving. All of us care
13 about our families, and we will not do work that hurts our
14 families.

15 Working to minimize the uncertainty and heightened
16 lifestyle requirements that are associated with military
17 service helps our Nation achieve current national
18 priorities, including stable defense personnel costs,
19 improved recruitment, retention and readiness, and a
20 sustainable force.

21 So our research suggests that service members' top
22 concern is for their family's well-being, and family well-
23 being is the top consideration for whether a service member
24 stays or leaves the force. While the military has adopted a
25 number of reforms to support military families in the past

1 few years, there are still many opportunities to do more.

2 Since our first Military Family Lifestyle Survey in
3 2009, we have seen what it means for military family members
4 to serve, and we looked at that blueprint for what it takes
5 to strengthen America by supporting those families. Each
6 year we emphasize two or three key areas of focus, and today
7 I will focus on those areas that have been key for us in
8 this 2015 survey.

9 Military caregivers. 32 percent of the people taking
10 our survey identified themselves as caregivers, whether they
11 were serving for an aging parent, a child with special
12 needs, or a wounded military service member. I think
13 importantly many of those military family members who
14 identified themselves as caregivers to a wounded service
15 member did not necessarily have a wounded service member who
16 identified themselves as wounded or was seeking treatment
17 that way. I think many times the service member's spouse
18 can identify symptoms of PTSD and TBI. That becomes a path
19 to serving them that is not something that gets identified
20 through formal identification from a service member.

21 Caretaking is fulfilling but stressful. 75 percent of
22 the caregivers in our survey had no warning that they were
23 going to become caregivers and therefore no training. They
24 find that lack of training to be difficult in terms of
25 allowing them to do their work.

1 Another challenge is the difficulty in finding
2 alternative caregivers to take over when they are unable to.
3 More than half found that they had a very difficult or
4 somewhat difficult time in finding respite.

5 Military-connected caregivers not only provide direct
6 care, including health care and health assistance, they do
7 case management. They provide psychological support, and
8 they provide legal and financial support. So they are very
9 important to the well-being of the wounded.

10 While care provided by military-connected caregivers
11 promotes faster recovery for wounded warriors and saves
12 millions of dollars in health care costs, most of those
13 cost-savings are absorbed by the caregiver's social, legal,
14 and economic costs. They are often unable to work, often
15 have to leave their work in order to provide that
16 caregiving.

17 And they themselves often experience health problems
18 that come from being a caregiver, both mental health and
19 physical health. Research indicates that the majority of
20 caregivers report that their own health worsens due to
21 caregiving, and the problems related to sleep, stress, pain,
22 depression, and weight changes are further concerns.

23 The problems associated with these consequences is that
24 military-connected caregivers often have little, if any,
25 time to prepare for becoming a caregiver and few widely and

1 comprehensive training programs to help them to prepare.
2 These are all issues that can be addressed and can be solved
3 and can make things stronger for us.

4 Military spouse employment is an area that we have
5 identified as a key concern for military families. The
6 majority of military families cannot field a two-income
7 household as 75 percent of most American families do. And
8 that leads to the economic insecurity that military
9 families, including service members, identify as their top
10 concern related to military life. Although removed from
11 warfighting, jobs for military spouses do make our military
12 stronger. Many companies have created successful
13 initiatives to hire veterans. We have an opportunity to
14 provide this same level of support for hiring military
15 spouses.

16 40 percent of respondents in our survey this past year
17 identified military spouse unemployment as the top obstacle
18 to their family's financial security. Only 45 percent of
19 active duty military spouses were employed full- or part-
20 time. 58 percent would like to be.

21 Military lifestyle factors have the greatest impact on
22 spouses' ability and preference to work. They move
23 frequently, every 1, 2, and 3 years. They are often in
24 remote locations. They have heightened caregiver
25 responsibilities. It is important to note that military

1 families with employed spouses report greater financial
2 security, greater mental health, and most importantly for
3 this committee, a higher satisfaction with the military
4 lifestyle.

5 Findings indicate that unemployment not only affects
6 financial security but it also affects the health of
7 military families. 68 percent of respondents who were not
8 employed experienced stress from their financial situations.
9 45 percent of unemployed military spouses reported symptoms
10 of depression, and 7 percent had thought seriously about
11 committing suicide. So we commend this issue for all of us
12 to pay attention.

13 To address these needs, we need to prioritize military
14 spouse employment and education initiatives. We can
15 increase coordinating efforts among public, private, and
16 nonprofit sectors to promote high-quality, portable work-
17 from-home positions for military spouses, and expand veteran
18 and military spouse hiring and training initiatives so that
19 both veterans and military spouses are included.

20 Finally, the frequent moves and geographic separation
21 from extended family members makes the need for child care
22 especially acute within military families. 35 percent in
23 our last survey said that they did not have child care that
24 met their needs. That is an enormous number. It is a major
25 challenge for working spouses, those seeking work, and even

1 those not in the labor force due to aspects of the military
2 lifestyle like unpredictable work hours, frequent absences,
3 deployments, and the inability to equitably share in child
4 care responsibilities.

5 And finally, I would like to just touch on behavioral
6 issues. The unique demands of military service result in
7 exceptional issues and challenges for service members and
8 their families. Top stressors for both active duty and
9 their spouses included employment and work stress,
10 deployments, financial and relocation issues. 52 percent of
11 military spouses say that isolation from family and friends
12 are a key stressor. Mental health for active duty and
13 veterans have been of national concern. It is also an issue
14 for our military spouses. Services are available to active
15 duty members and their families, but 17 percent of
16 respondents did not use a program or benefit related to
17 mental health care because they had concern about
18 confidentiality and treatment.

19 In addition, a major study by Eaton, et al. found that
20 military spouses have similar rates of mental health
21 problems to the soldiers themselves, and often display
22 greater symptoms of depression and anxiety following
23 separation from their spouses due to deployment. This study
24 found that 12 percent of military spouses screen positive
25 for major depression, and 17 percent screen positive for

1 generalized anxiety.

2 As mentioned previously, military spouse unemployment
3 raises stress levels for military spouses and their service
4 member.

5 We also found that mental health was a factor with
6 caregivers. 44 percent of caregivers responded they found
7 caregiving somewhat stressful. 16 percent found it
8 extremely stressful.

9 Blue Star Families believes that military families are
10 assets to both our national defense and local communities.
11 They are central to the health and capability of the all-
12 volunteer force and are good neighbors who actively engage
13 in making their civilian communities great places to live.

14 Service members may be employed by their respective
15 services, but they work for all Americans. Thus, the
16 responsibility for supporting military families is certainly
17 the duty of the Department of Defense. However, a healthy
18 Nation also shares in this responsibility. We believe there
19 are many programs that would have no impact on the national
20 budget that would greatly affect military families and DOD
21 by allowing us to more actively partner. Nonprofit, private
22 sector, and government can help address many of these
23 concerns.

24 Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

25 [The prepared statement of Ms. Roth-Douquet follows:]

1 Senator Graham: Ms. Raezer?
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1 STATEMENT OF JOYCE W. RAEZER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
2 NATIONAL MILITARY FAMILY ASSOCIATION

3 Ms. Raezer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member
4 Gillibrand, Senator Blumenthal. I appreciate the
5 opportunity to speak today on behalf of the National
6 Military Family Association and the military families we
7 serve about the fiscal year 2017 Defense Department budget
8 proposals.

9 Our statement submitted for the record addresses many
10 of the issues covered by the budget proposals and others
11 that we wish had been covered. I will confine my remarks
12 right now, in the interest of time, to just two of those
13 issues: pay and TRICARE reform.

14 DOD officials like to highlight that their proposed
15 2017 pay raise of 1.6 percent is the largest basic pay raise
16 in 4 years. But as you have noted, if this raise goes
17 through, 2017 will mark the fourth year in a row military
18 pay raises have lagged behind the Employment Cost Index, the
19 standard currently in law.

20 In recent testimony before the House Military
21 Construction and VA Appropriations Subcommittee, the
22 military services senior enlisted advisors spoke of the
23 damage to morale that is being done by budget-driven
24 compensation cuts. These lower pay raises head the list of
25 morale concerns for the enlisted advisors. We are very

1 happy to hear that you also share their concerns.

2 Although its primary mission is to ensure medical
3 providers have the training and tools they need to keep our
4 troops strong when in harm's way, the military health system
5 also has an obligation to deliver high-quality care to
6 military families, retirees, and their families and
7 survivors. Too often families tell us DOD fails to meet
8 this obligation.

9 We surveyed more than 6,100 military spouses in
10 December and January. Nearly 30 percent of those who use
11 military treatment facilities reported they rarely or never
12 get an acute care appointment within the 24-hour access
13 standard.

14 Any discussion of TRICARE reform must start with how
15 DOD can fix the problems it knows exist regarding access,
16 quality, and patient satisfaction. Unfortunately, DOD
17 provides few details in its budget proposal on actual
18 improvements to the value of TRICARE or how it will enhance
19 medical readiness. Instead, it focuses first on how much
20 military families should pay for their health care. What is
21 presented as a comprehensive restructure is really just a
22 repackaging of the current system at a higher cost to many
23 families and with no expansion of networks or improved
24 benefits. Continuing to recapture care in military
25 hospitals already failing to provide timely appropriate

1 access for current enrollees will neither improve patient
2 satisfaction nor comprehensively address readiness needs.
3 And I look forward to the opportunity during the question
4 and answer to share some of our recommendations about things
5 we would like you to consider.

6 To echo Ms. Roth-Douquet's comment about behavioral
7 health needs, this is one area that the Department has not
8 addressed in their budget, that increasing demand for
9 behavioral health services. In that same survey of 6,100
10 military spouses, 40 percent reported that they had looked
11 for behavioral health care for themselves or someone in
12 their family. The demand is outstripping the supply.

13 So as you evaluate the Department's proposed budget,
14 please consider how it will meet the needs of military
15 families and add value to their quality of life and to the
16 service members' quality of service. Does this budget make
17 a service member more ready to perform the mission? Does it
18 make a mom feel that her sick child's health is a priority?
19 Does it ease uncertainty? Does it ensure support will be
20 available for a family during a deployment? Does it support
21 a spouse eager for a career? Bottom line, does this budget
22 keep our military families strong?

23 Thank you for your support of military families.

24 [The prepared statement of Ms. Raezer follows:]

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1 Senator Graham: Mr. Bousum?
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1 STATEMENT OF SCOTT BOUSUM, LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, THE
2 ENLISTED ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED
3 STATES

4 Mr. Bousum: Chairman Graham, Ranking Member
5 Gillibrand, Senator Blumenthal, thank you for allowing me to
6 testify on behalf of the Enlisted Association of the
7 National Guard of the United States.

8 Our membership represents over 414,000 enlisted men and
9 women of the Army and Air National Guard, their families and
10 survivors, and tens of thousands of National Guard retirees.
11 Their lives are touched in some way by the decisions that
12 are made by you and your colleagues on the Armed Services
13 Committee.

14 I worked closely with you and your staff and your House
15 counterparts as you developed and considered the blend of
16 retirement proposals in the fiscal year 2016 National
17 Defense Authorization Act. We understand that much of the
18 conversation this year will be about reforms to the health
19 care system.

20 Reforms to the personnel system and defense acquisition
21 system are driven by the budget. It is clear the Department
22 of Defense needs additional funds to research new
23 technologies, procure new weapons platforms, maintain
24 equipment, start new construction projects, and train and
25 pay service members and civilian staff.

1 This year the Personnel Subcommittee is looking to
2 reform military health care without sacrificing quality,
3 cost, and access. During last month's budget rollout, the
4 Department of Defense distributed health care proposals to
5 the active component. While the Department is still
6 considering improvements for members of the Reserve
7 component, I am prepared to discuss some of the ideas
8 starting to be socialized on Capitol Hill, such as
9 transferring the management of the Reserve component health
10 care to the Office of Personnel Management.

11 In conjunction with the Reserve Officers Association
12 and the National Guard Association of the United States, we
13 circulated a health care satisfaction survey to our members.
14 Together, our membership reflects the entirety of the
15 Reserve component, officers and enlisted. The results of
16 our survey are enclosed with my written testimony. Our
17 survey shows that our membership likes TRICARE when it works
18 as designed.

19 Continuity of care is our greatest challenge.

20 I understand that the Reserve Officers Association
21 submitted a written statement today with excerpts from our
22 survey, and I am prepared to address those comments as well.

23 Thank you again for hosting today's hearing and for
24 inviting me to discuss Department of Defense personnel
25 programs. I look forward to answering your questions.

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[The prepared statement of Mr. Bousum follows:]

1 Senator Graham: Mr. Davis?

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1 STATEMENT OF JOSEPH E. DAVIS, PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIRECTOR,
2 VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

3 Mr. Davis: Thank you, Chairman Graham, Ranking Member
4 Gillibrand, Senator Blumenthal. Thank you for letting the
5 1.7 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and
6 auxiliaries giving us a voice here.

7 The VFW can support a lot of initiatives currently on
8 the table, such as the Force of the Future and better
9 suicide and sexual assault prevention and response programs.
10 Some initiatives we want tweaked, such as matching military
11 pay raises to the ECI, increasing the government's TSP
12 contribution to 6 percent, and extending it through
13 retirement. And some initiatives the VFW opposes, such as
14 starting the government's TSP program match in year 5
15 instead of year 3, dismantling TRICARE on the promise that
16 better service will follow after enrollment fees are created
17 or increased, and anything that impacts morale, such as the
18 continuation of sequestration, which is still the law of the
19 land.

20 Everything the VFW wants costs money, but everything we
21 want is for somebody else, another veteran, a service member
22 or their families and survivors. As I said in my written
23 statement, our government's most important responsibility is
24 to provide for the security and integrity of our Nation and
25 very close second is taking care of those who protect us.

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I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Davis follows:]

1 Senator Graham: Thank you. That was excellent by all
2 of you.

3 Ms. Raezer, when it comes to TRICARE reform, my goal is
4 to make the program sustainable in terms of the budget but
5 also to make it more efficient and not repackage the system
6 and just charge you more. That is exactly where we are
7 headed, and we are not going to do that. We are going to
8 change the system. And give me just a couple of top line
9 recommendations.

10 Ms. Raezer: I think, first of all, start with what you
11 are talking about, start with what is the benefit we want to
12 deliver, what are the problems we need to solve. Start with
13 designing that and then talk about what people should pay.

14 Consider the whole military health system. We cannot
15 wall off the military treatment facility and say they have
16 got to take care of readiness. They do not have a dog in
17 this hunt. They do. Our active duty families are having
18 the most trouble with the direct care system. So we have to
19 consider it as a system.

20 Look at ways to pilot some innovations. I think some
21 of the suggestions on the Reserve component side may be
22 useful for pilots or --

23 Senator Graham: Can I interrupt right there? Mr.
24 Bousum. How do you say it?

25 Mr. Bousum: Bousum.

1 Senator Graham: Bousum. I am sorry.

2 So we are actually thinking about taking the Guard and
3 Reserve and basically putting it into the Federal employee
4 system. Right?

5 Mr. Bousum: Correct.

6 Senator Graham: To me that is pretty exciting. I
7 mean, Guard and reservists generally speaking are not next
8 to military treatment facilities, and it basically would
9 give you the same access to providers every Member of
10 Congress and our staff has. You feel like that would be the
11 way to go?

12 Mr. Bousum: We do feel like that would be the way to
13 go.

14 Senator Graham: You know you got to pay for it.

15 Mr. Bousum: True. And on that point, we would like
16 for TRICARE Reserve Select to be an option on FEHPD.

17 Senator Graham: Perfect.

18 Ms. Roth- --

19 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Like a bouquet of flowers.

20 Senator Graham: Douquet. Okay.

21 About child care, that is probably a problem for
22 everybody in the country I guess. What could we do better?

23 Ms. Roth-Douquet: There are a couple things. It is a
24 problem for everyone in the country, but it is moving every
25 1, 2, and 3 years. So even if you do find it, you break it

1 and have to start over again.

2 Senator Graham: That is the problem is just people
3 move all the time.

4 Ms. Roth-Douquet: That is the problem. Exactly.

5 I think there is a lot to be said in investing more in
6 child care centers on base and extending the hours to hours
7 that military-connected women, the female service members
8 need, starting them from 4:00 a.m. going to 8:00 p.m. That
9 would help a lot. Increasing training for military spouses
10 to be child care providers so that we both address
11 employment --

12 Senator Graham: That would fit two needs there.

13 Ms. Roth-Douquet: You would hit two needs there.

14 And recognizing that this is a reason people leave
15 military service, both females and males. So there is a
16 rationale for making investments in it that pay off.

17 Senator Graham: We will definitely push that to make
18 sure they are looking at using the talented people to maybe
19 provide child care.

20 Mr. Davis, I really appreciate you talking about
21 sequestration. I just want you to know that if we do not
22 fix the top lines, none of this is going to work. When 70
23 percent of the Marine Corps' expense comes in personnel, I
24 do not know how you keep them ready to fight. This is
25 insane. The threat levels are going through the roof. The

1 number of people in the services is well below what the
2 threat level exists, and we are taking money out of
3 modernization, which means the next fight is -- I am not
4 looking for a fair fight. I want an overwhelming advantage
5 to all the enemies this country may ever face. So I just
6 want to compliment you because you are one of the first
7 organizations to actually weigh in on the elephant in the
8 room, which is the top line number.

9 Mr. Davis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciated the
10 last panel discussion about sequestration because it was
11 created 5 years ago, but it is still the law of the land.

12 Senator Graham: And look what has happened in the last
13 5 years.

14 Mr. Davis: You know, everybody in Congress hates it,
15 but nobody has yet dropped the legislation to end it. We
16 have got to figure out how to fix it.

17 Senator Graham: Thank you all.

18 When it comes to health care, I want to try to do in
19 health care what we did in retirement, think outside the box
20 and get better value and save some money in the process.

21 Senator Gillibrand?

22 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 And, Ms. Roth-Douquet, I would like to work with you on
24 a child care center proposal to actually write language for
25 this year's NDAA because I think it is fundamentally one of

1 the biggest problems about why some of the men and women we
2 have trained for 10 years are leaving the military because
3 right when childbearing years happen, they do not have the
4 resources for affordable day care and they cannot manage
5 their child care responsibilities. So we are losing so much
6 of our trained men and women because we did not take care of
7 their most important need. So I would like to work with
8 you.

9 I would like to ask you, Ms. Raezer, about a bill that
10 Senator Blunt and I introduced in the fall. It is called
11 the Military Family Stability Act, which both of your
12 organizations support. It allows families of service
13 members to move ahead or remain behind for up to 6 months
14 for schooling and employment purposes.

15 So what led your organizations to support the bill?

16 I also support family leave for service members to care
17 for children or sick family members. From your experience
18 and that of your members, would a more generous leave policy
19 for spouses also be helpful? And would these policies not
20 help with retention and improve the view of the military as
21 a family-friendly employer?

22 Ms. Raezer: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.

23 I just also want to note on the child care issue our
24 written statement contains some of our recommendations on
25 solutions for the child care issue. So we would love to

1 work with you on that as well.

2 Senator Gillibrand: Great.

3 Ms. Raezer: I think the Stability Act -- I think
4 military families are seeking certainty but sometimes that
5 certainty means they need some flexibility to adjust family
6 life to the needs of the military. And too often, they do
7 not have that flexibility to create a little more certainty
8 in their lives. Whether that makes sense or not, it does to
9 many military families.

10 And so what the Stability Act does and was attractive
11 to us was that it allowed families to plan not just forcing
12 all of their plans around a PCS move. We have a senior in
13 high school. It would be great to be able to allow that
14 senior to graduate. We have a spouse finishing their degree
15 program in nursing, one more semester to go. Would it not
16 be great? Or spouse that knows they are going to PCS, has
17 been looking or a job finds one, but they need him or to
18 start now, allowing that family to move ahead. That kind of
19 flexibility adds to the military family's loyalty to the
20 military. It could add to family financial stability, and
21 it also helps the family feel a little more in control of
22 their circumstances. And that is why we support it and that
23 is why we appreciate your introducing that bill.

24 Senator Gillibrand: Thoughts on leave, paid leave?

25 Ms. Roth-Douquet: I think paid leave is very useful.

1 What we find with our young families -- and they are
2 millennials -- having some control is extremely important to
3 them. So the Family Stability Act allows them to choose for
4 their family when the move is a good time to go. I think
5 the paid leave also puts a little modicum of choice into
6 their own hands. The uncertainty of military lifestyle is
7 the number one concern that service members stated in our
8 last survey. And these kinds of efforts make a huge
9 difference with that.

10 People pay out of pocket. My husband and mine's last
11 move -- we paid \$10,000 out of pocket to keep our children
12 in school in Germany to finish the semester when he had a
13 PCS June 1st. If I was not working, that would have been
14 extremely difficult for our family. That happens over and
15 over again. 25 percent of military families choose to live
16 geographically separated because of issues that make moving
17 together difficult. That is too much for our families and
18 for the future.

19 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

20 Mr. Bousum, I believe the National Guard can play a
21 unique role in recruiting and training cyber warriors.
22 Individuals in the private sector can join the National
23 Guard, leveraging their expertise for the military. For
24 service members with training in cyber warfare, they can
25 move into the National Guard upon retirement, allowing the

1 military to continue utilizing their skills and knowledge.

2 What do you see as the role of the National Guard in
3 cyber warfare? And how can DOD better support our National
4 Guard members?

5 Mr. Bousum: I agree. I think that partnerships,
6 especially in more populated corridors where our guardsmen
7 and women can go in and work in the private sector and
8 actually be skilled up on how to secure private company
9 databases -- yes, I think that a public-private partnership
10 would be a good first step, and I definitely think that
11 there is room for the Guard in this area.

12 Senator Gillibrand: Great.

13 For the record, Ms. Roth-Douquet and Ms. Raezer, I want
14 to ask you specifically about the cutting of the autism
15 reimbursements, and you can answer that for the record. But
16 we have heard it is really damaging because the
17 reimbursement rates for the people who typically give the
18 applied behavioral therapy is so low that they cannot get a
19 number of treatments that they need. So that I will leave
20 for the record.

21 [The information follows:]

22 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Gillibrand: And for Mr. Davis for the record,
2 I am very concerned about Agent Orange for our blue water
3 Navy vets getting the treatment that they need. The VA has
4 been arbitrary and just decided if you are serving on blue
5 water, you are not covered. If it was brown water, you are
6 covered, even though aircraft was covered with Agent Orange,
7 even though they were drinking and bathing in Agent Orange-
8 strewn water and have the diseases related to exposure.

9 I would like a question for the record on that
10 specifically for you to respond to.

11 [The information follows:]

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1 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you so much for your
2 testimony.

3 Senator Graham: Senator King?

4 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for
5 allowing me to rejoin the hearing.

6 First to our two representatives of the families, in my
7 college years in the Washington area, I worked for Allied
8 Van Lines moving principally military families. And I will
9 never forget one military spouse turned to me and said, you
10 know, five moves equals a fire. And that was the pressure
11 of the moving and the wear and tear on the family and also
12 on the possessions. And I just want to join with Senator
13 Gillibrand. We have got to build in flexibility for the
14 family when the duty station changes but the school is still
15 not done. I mean, I think that is something that we really
16 need to take care of hopefully this year because it is just
17 so difficult.

18 Mr. Bousum, we talked in the prior panel about the
19 OPTEMPO, and part of that is the Guard and the pressure that
20 has been put on the Guard in recent years. Are we
21 overstressing the Guard by numbers of deployments, length of
22 deployment, and is that something that we should be
23 concerned about both in terms of the Guard, and I am also
24 concerned about the employer base, which is starting to get
25 testy about this frequent deployment and lengths of

1 deployment.

2 Mr. Bousum: I do not think we are overstressing the
3 Guard. I think that the Guard would like to see more
4 predictability. I also think that the overuse of 12304b
5 orders -- and part of that is in my written testimony -- is
6 putting a lot of stress on family members and our service
7 members. But I do not think that we are overstressing the
8 Guard.

9 Senator King: So predictability is more important to
10 you than numbers, number of deployments.

11 The Guard rests to some extent on the good will and
12 support of employers, and I am hearing resistance from
13 employers.

14 Mr. Bousum: And I think it has a bit to do with
15 predictability, not quantity. I think that in the post-9/11
16 world, the reason people join the Guard or the active
17 component is because they want to serve. So our members of
18 the Guard want to serve. They just want more predictability
19 so that they can allow their employer to plan for it.

20 Senator King: Good. That is helpful.

21 I will ask the same question for the record that I
22 asked of the prior panel, and that is, could you supply your
23 reflections and thoughts on the effect of the retirement
24 changes that were made last year, and are there some
25 necessary adjustments to achieve the goals of that plan but

1 to achieve them in a more equitable or more effective way?

2 So if you could just give us that for the record.

3 [The information follows:]

4 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator King: The largest question before this
2 committee is, are we recruiting and retaining the people
3 that we need? And are there policies that are getting in
4 the way? It worries me that, at a time of increasing
5 threats, we are downsizing, as you probably heard me ask the
6 questions. But also, the requirements for our military
7 personnel are increasing. We have Navy ships now that are
8 manned by -- personed by half of the number that were there
9 5-10 years ago. So the skill level is raised. Are the
10 personnel policies, salaries, benefits, retirement
11 sufficient to attract and retain the people that we need?

12 Ms. Raezer: I think that is a huge question that the
13 Department faces, that the Nation faces. Right now, if you
14 look at the recruiting numbers, you are seeing the services
15 are meeting their numbers. They are struggling in some
16 cases, but they are meeting their numbers.

17 We are concerned on the retention side, as all of these
18 things that we have talked about today, the OPTEMPO, the
19 unpredictability, the uncertainty, the pressure on
20 compensation and benefits, the inability to find child care
21 or get an appointment for a sick child or to help that
22 special needs child with additional services, that that day-
23 to-day grind sometimes is what is wearing our folks down to
24 the point where they say we cannot do this anymore. A
25 spouse finds a good job, and the service member says, you

1 know, let us get out know. Let us not move. Let us not
2 mess up what we have. And that is the worry.

3 Senator King: The retention is so important because if
4 we could move the average retention out a year, that would
5 be a significant savings across the board because of the
6 training costs. We are spending a lot of money to train
7 people for a 5-year stint. And I understand the average
8 retention period is about 5-plus years. Is that the right
9 number?

10 Ms. Raezer: It depends on the service.

11 Mr. Bousum: Yes, it depends on the service. It
12 depends on the component. The National Guard tends to serve
13 much longer.

14 Senator King: Oh, yes, much longer. I understand, but
15 I am talking about active duty.

16 I mean, retention, it seems to me, has got to be a key
17 element because of the training costs.

18 Ms. Raezer: But it is also difficult right now because
19 several of the services are downsizing. So what is the
20 incentive for somebody who is highly skilled, who has skills
21 that are in demand outside the military? Even if they want
22 to stay in the uncertain time of downsizing, what is the
23 incentive to stay? If you can find a better opportunity,
24 take it. And so part of the retention problem is the
25 uncertainty the military faces.

1 Senator King: I want to ask our two advocates for the
2 families to answer this question. If you could wave a wand,
3 if you were sitting on this side of the dais -- not that we
4 get to wave wands. It is harder than that. But if you
5 could wave a wand, what are the two or three things that you
6 would do to improve the lives of military families?

7 Ms. Roth-Douquet: I frankly think we have the
8 opportunity to do that and not spend a lot of budget money,
9 and that is to use the bully pulpit to bring more jobs to
10 military spouses. We can double the pay of most military
11 families, the majority, 60 percent, by employing spouses at
12 the level they want to be working and that they are employed
13 and able to work. It is one of the top reasons that
14 otherwise promotable people leave the service. And it is
15 just families taking care of themselves the way they want to
16 and the way other American families do.

17 Senator King: Is the difficulty for spouses due to the
18 mobility problem? They have a hard time getting a job --

19 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Most people get jobs through
20 relationships, and when you are moving every 1, 2, or 3
21 years, you are in a place where it takes a while to get a
22 relationship. But now that there is remote work -- and
23 military spouses are invisible. You cannot tell they are a
24 military spouse. But if we called on the American people to
25 hire these talented folks particularly in technology and

1 remote work areas or in the kinds of work we were talking
2 about with child care or give more of a preference for on-
3 base hiring, especially overseas where people are otherwise
4 not able to work, yet we are flying people overseas to take
5 jobs that military spouses could do, we could make a
6 significant dent in something that I think is actually
7 destabilizing our force.

8 Senator King: A new motto, Mr. Chairman. Support our
9 warriors. Hire the spouse.

10 Senator Graham: Very good.

11 Ms. Roth-Douquet: There you go.

12 Ms. Raezer: If I could wave a wand and fix something,
13 I would make the military health system more responsive to
14 the needs of our families.

15 Senator Graham: Senator Blumenthal?

16 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

17 I can attest to the fact that nobody on this side of
18 the United States Senate wears a Blue Star. And I want to
19 thank you for your excellent work.

20 People sometimes say to me, oh, only two of you? But
21 the fact of the matter is that less than 2 percent of our
22 population has really been involved in an active family way
23 in any of the wars over these last 15 years. And I think
24 that accounts for some of the issues that have been raised
25 here because if more people were affected, there would be

1 more interest and less invisibility to the issues that you
2 have very rightly raised. And I certainly commend you, all
3 of you, for focusing on the need for greater health care and
4 job opportunities, training for spouses, and other members
5 of military families.

6 I want to ask you, Mr. Bousum, you made a statement
7 which I cannot contest with any hard evidence, but my
8 experience has been -- and I spend a lot of time with our
9 National Guard and our reservists in Connecticut, but they
10 are really weary that their families, more than they, are
11 weary. Our National Guard and our Reserve are always ready
12 to go. They will answer the call. They are there because
13 they want to serve, as you have said correctly. But their
14 families pay an enormous price, their children. After two,
15 three, or more deployments over a period of maybe 5 to 10
16 years, their families suffer or serve and sacrifice as much
17 or more than they do. So I would tend to agree that maybe
18 they are not feeling the war weariness and maybe the direct
19 effects, but their families seem to be -- at least
20 substantial numbers.

21 Would you agree or disagree? I would be interested in
22 you thoughts.

23 Mr. Bousum: Yes, I do agree with that, and I certainly
24 agree with your statement that our family members make as
25 much of a sacrifice as our service members do.

1 I think that a lot of what you are saying has to do
2 with the continuity of care challenges in the health care
3 realm that part of this hearing is trying to address. There
4 is a lot of bureaucracy when we have 30-some duty statuses
5 and there is a lot of fudging the numbers and pushing the
6 paperwork in a way that it jeopardizes the benefits that our
7 service members receive. And so there is a lot of knee-jerk
8 reactions and decisions based off of information that they
9 just got the day before. And so I think that if we can
10 address some of the health care challenges facing our
11 members of the National Guard, especially rural members of
12 the National Guard, that we will start to see that turn
13 around.

14 Senator Blumenthal: Let me ask all of you. And I was
15 particularly interested in what you said, Mr. Davis, about
16 the link between national security and personnel policy
17 because I think the two are clearly related.

18 You know, I just came from a hearing of the Airland
19 Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee, and the Air
20 Force was testifying. And in a remote paragraph of one of
21 the testimonies, there was this fact. We have 511 open
22 pilot positions right now, a deficit, as they put it, of
23 511, which is expected to increase to 834 by 2022. We tend
24 to focus on all the bright, shiny objects, the new hardware,
25 the F-35, the new planes and all the technology that is

1 exploding in significance, and we should be because
2 ultimately that technology and weapons platforms are key.
3 But we need to recruit and retain, train, and put to work
4 the best of our people in the United States. So I want to
5 thank you all for your focus on this fact.

6 This subcommittee is in my view as important or more
7 important than any of the other subcommittees that we have
8 because ultimately our greatest asset as a military is our
9 people.

10 Thank you very much for being here.

11 Senator Graham: Any other questions?

12 [No response.]

13 Senator Graham: It is often said you recruit
14 individuals and you retain families. You think about it. A
15 lot of people come in single. By the time they reenlist,
16 they are well on their way to having their own families.

17 Mr. Davis, was there anything you wanted to add?

18 Mr. Davis: Sir, I could ask Scott right here to read
19 because I basically said right here you recruit the
20 individuals and retain the families. I just wrote it as a
21 note.

22 [Laughter.]

23 Senator Graham: The NSA told me about what you were
24 going to say.

25 [Laughter.]

1 Senator Graham: The bottom line is not only do you
2 help us understand the nature of family service, you have
3 ideas. I like you all because you just do not complain.
4 You actually have concrete things that maybe we can
5 implement. Without you, we would be literally in the dark
6 because only two members here have family members. So
7 without you, we would really not understand what it is like
8 to serve.

9 In that regard, thank you very much, and we will try to
10 implement as much of your ideas as we can, given the budget
11 constraints we have.

12 The hearing is adjourned.

13 [Whereupon, at 4:30 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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