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Before the

Subcommittee on Personnel

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON
MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL PROGRAMS AND
MILITARY FAMILY READINESS

Wednesday, February 14, 2018

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HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON
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Wednesday, February 14, 2018

U.S. Senate
Subcommittee on Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:03 p.m. in Room SR-232A, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Thom Tillis, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Subcommittee Members Present: Senators Tillis [presiding], Ernst, Gillibrand, McCaskill, Kaine, and Warren.

1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. THOM TILLIS, U.S. SENATOR
2 FROM NORTH CAROLINA

3 Senator Tillis: I'm going to bring the hearing to
4 order. Ranking Member Gillibrand will be joining us, but, in
5 the interest, making sure we have time for both panels,
6 thank you all for being here.

7 The Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel
8 meets this afternoon to receive testimony on military and
9 civilian personnel programs and on military family
10 readiness. We are fortunate today to have the Under
11 Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and the
12 services' personnel chiefs to discuss the Department's
13 military and civilian personnel programs, and to have
14 several important civilian witnesses to discuss military
15 family readiness.

16 On panel 1, we will hear from The Honorable Robert
17 Wilkie, Under Secretary of Defense in Personnel and
18 Readiness, and, actually, a former colleague of mine in my
19 office; Lieutenant General Thomas Seamands, Deputy Army
20 Chief of Staff; Vice Admiral Robert Burke, the Chief of
21 Naval Personnel, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for
22 Manpower, Personnel, Training, and Education; Lieutenant
23 General Gina Grosso, Deputy Air Force Chief of Staff for
24 Manpower, Personnel, and Services; and Lieutenant General
25 Rocco -- Michael Rocco, Deputy Marine Commandant, Manpower

1 and Reserve Affairs.

2 Thank you all for being here.

3 I'll introduce the second panel during the transition.

4 The recently released National Defense Strategy
5 correctly states that creativity and talent of the American
6 warfighter is our military's greatest enduring strength.
7 Therefore, the topics this subcommittee will discuss today
8 are vital to the health and effectiveness of our All-
9 Volunteer Force. As the Nation faces an increasingly
10 complex global security environment, our military's
11 personnel programs and policies must build on an agile and
12 adaptable force capable of responding to the uncertain
13 threats we face.

14 A high-quality military and civilian workforce must
15 appeal to this Nation's best and brightest young people,
16 provide greater stability and flexibility to servicemembers
17 in their professional and personal lives, and provide
18 compensation commensurate with the level of responsibility
19 inherent to a military career.

20 As we do all of this, we can't lose sight of the
21 military families who support our troops much better than
22 any personnel policy ever could. Military families confront
23 unique stressors and challenges which must be considered in
24 any discussion of military personnel management. The
25 Congress needs to understand military families' concerns and

1 work diligently to ensure that the Department of Defense
2 provides the support and the services families need. The
3 readiness of our Armed Forces, and, ultimately, our Nation's
4 security, depends on it, because, if the Defense Department
5 fails to support military families, our volunteer
6 servicemembers will simply walk away.

7 Finally, I look forward to hearing from Secretary
8 Wilkie and the personnel chiefs about their efforts to
9 improve recruitment and retention of military and civilian
10 personnel, to improve military personnel and family
11 readiness, to prevent sexual assault and harassment, to
12 reduce servicemember and family suicides, to combat domestic
13 violence and child abuse, and to enhance childcare services,
14 and, finally, to improve employment opportunities for
15 military spouses.

16 I hope the civilian witnesses on the panel -- on panel
17 2 will describe the challenges faced by military families
18 and give us good ideas about how we can improve family
19 readiness.

20 I want to thank all the witnesses for being here today,
21 and I look forward to hearing your testimony.

22 And I want to especially thank Senator Ernst. She's a
23 frequent attender of subcommittees. I know she's got a lot
24 of subcommittees today; she's bouncing in and out.

25 And, Senator Ernst, I would offer time for you to make

1 any opening comment.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. JONI ERNST, U.S. SENATOR FROM IOWA

2 Senator Ernst: Certainly. This is a rare occasion,
3 since I'm not a Chair or Ranking Member of this committee.
4 But -- so, I don't have any prepared statements, but I do
5 want to thank you for being here today.

6 And a number of questions that I have from -- later on,
7 if we get to those -- Senator Tillis addressed most of them
8 in his opening comments. One that I want to raise awareness
9 on, and something that we do talk about, is recruitment of
10 our forces, and how do we sustain readiness with an ever-
11 decreasing population that will not meet the height-weight
12 standards to come into the service.

13 Senator Tillis and I engaged in a ruck march last week,
14 something we frequently do on the Hill, so --

15 Senator Tillis: It was cold.

16 Senator Ernst: It was -- for a North Carolinian, it
17 was cold. It was a beautiful day for an Iowegian. But, we
18 were joined by Sergeant Major of the Army Daley, and we had
19 a great discussion about recruiting young people, and we
20 talked a lot about the benefits and opportunities that are
21 extended to these young people. But, the fact of the matter
22 is, we need a pipeline of people coming into the service.
23 And I had some physical education teachers from Iowa in this
24 morning, and they stated that 71 percent of our students
25 will not be able to qualify for military service, because

1 they're simply not ready, coming out of high school, because
2 of those height-weight standards. So, I'm not suggesting
3 that we need to lower standards at all. I think we keep the
4 standard, but what we have to do is focus on that pipeline
5 and make sure that, if they want to serve, they are ready to
6 serve as they exit high school.

7 So, thank you very much for the opportunity, Mr. Chair.

8 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Senator Ernst.

9 Ranking Member Gillibrand.

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

3 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. I really appreciate
4 your work.

5 As we begin our review of DOD's military and civilian
6 personnel budgets and programs, I remain concerned about the
7 pace of accessing and signing women into all military
8 occupations and units that were previously denied to them.
9 It has been 2 years now since the Secretary of Defense and
10 the Obama administration lifted the remaining restrictions.
11 A lot of progress has been made, but we must be vigilant
12 that occupational standards remain rooted in everyday
13 requirements of military duty, as required by law, to ensure
14 an equal playing field for all, and that we field the best
15 possible military we can, and recruit and retain the best
16 people.

17 Second, I applaud the Department, and you, Mr. Wilkie,
18 for finally publishing a Uniform Anti-Harassment Policy
19 applicable to all uniformed military members, required by
20 the 2013 defense bill, which is nearly 5 years late. I have
21 some questions about what you choose to include and what is
22 not included in the policy. And I understand that the next
23 steps, which you are working on, is a policy for the
24 Department's civilian and contractor workforces. I'm also
25 interested in hearing about your efforts to curb retaliation

1 against those who report sexual assault and harassment
2 within the ranks. The reported retaliation rate against
3 survivors has consistently been around 60 percent, which is
4 deeply troubling.

5 An area that we have not talked about sufficiently is
6 intimate partner violence and child abuse. This came to the
7 forefront last year with the shooting by Devin Patrick
8 Kelley, in Texas. In that instance, the system failed in
9 keeping a gun out of his hands. And I know that the
10 services have been looking at how this had happened, and
11 working to ensure that it doesn't happen again. But, a less
12 reported data point I think is staggering is that, in fiscal
13 year 2016, there were 13,916 reports of suspected incidents
14 of child abuse and neglect, and, horribly, 18 child-abuse-
15 related fatalities. All of the deceased victims were under
16 5 years old, and half of them were under 1 year old. In
17 addition, there were nine spouse or intimate-partner
18 fatalities. Unfortunately, we do not have prevalence data
19 for these crimes, but the data that is out there suggests to
20 me that we should be paying more attention to this issue.
21 So, I'm grateful to Senator Tillis for agreeing to hold a
22 hearing devoted to intimate-partner violence and child abuse
23 next month.

24 In terms of the Department's budget request, the fiscal
25 year '18 request for military personnel, including

1 healthcare, totaled 180 billion. This year's request is 187
2 billion. I look forward to hearing from our government
3 witnesses where these additional funds would be used in
4 order to increase military family readiness. I do have to
5 say, however, that I'm extremely disappointed that, even
6 with 85 billion in additional funding provided by the budget
7 deal passed by Congress, that the President has proposed
8 freezing the pay of Federal civilian workforce, half of whom
9 work within DOD and its services. I believe this is
10 shortsighted, unnecessary, and will further erode morale and
11 trust among our civilian employees.

12 Thank you, Senator Tillis, for including the second
13 panel today, which is the focus of a military families
14 program. I am especially pleased to welcome Dr. J. Michael
15 Haynie, from Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans
16 and Military Families, which he leads, and which has done
17 some very important work supporting military families' post-
18 service employment and financial readiness.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 Senator Tillis: We'll just share this mic.

21 Senator Kaine has joined us. Senator Kaine is not on
22 this subcommittee, but I understood yesterday that he was
23 talking about stepping in. So, Senator Kaine, before we
24 receive testimony from the first panel, if you'd like to
25 make some comments, we'll recognize you at this time.

1 STATEMENT OF HON. TIM Kaine, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 VIRGINIA

3 Senator Kaine: I want to thank the Chair and the
4 Ranking, and thank the witnesses and colleagues for
5 forbearance on this. I am the ranking on the Readiness
6 Subcommittee, and we're meeting around the corner. And so,
7 I wanted to just make brief comments on a readiness and
8 personal matter, and then race back.

9 Family readiness. Family readiness, which is so
10 critical to personnel, but to the entire military mission.
11 I firmly believe that family readiness, and specifically
12 military spouse unemployment, is a military readiness issue.
13 I have a child in the military who recently is married, and
14 so now I'm experiencing the discussions about this issue in
15 a different way than I have before. But, I hear about it
16 from folks all over the Commonwealth, and I'm sure it's the
17 same for all my colleagues. They hear about it in their
18 State.

19 Military families face significant financial strain in
20 security and sacrifice because of having single incomes or
21 also because of the frequent moves. And this places an
22 enormous strain on the force. I think we've often heard our
23 military leaders testify, in the full hearings, that often
24 it's the servicemember that makes the decision to enlist,
25 but whether somebody stays or not is most often a family

1 decision. So, we need to focus on retaining top talent.
2 Military life will never be easy on those who serve or their
3 families, but, while we can't make military service easy,
4 sometimes we can lighten the burden on families and make it
5 a little bit more doable.

6 Within the last 2 weeks, I introduced Senate -- S.
7 2379, the Military Spouse Employment Act. And I want to
8 thank Senators Gillibrand, Murray, and Purdue for being
9 cosponsors of the legislation. Truly bipartisan. It's been
10 introduced in a bipartisan way on the House side, as well.

11 Spouses are facing unemployment rates two to -- at
12 least three times higher than the national average, and some
13 surveys have that rate as seven times higher. And the only
14 reason there is a range is, we haven't cared enough about
15 the figure to really accurately measure it. We do measure
16 veterans' unemployment rate very well through the Department
17 of Labor, but military spouse unemployment hasn't been a
18 priority, so the measures are more difficult, and they have
19 to be done via survey.

20 When we saw, collectively, similar rates among
21 veterans-- a veterans unemployment rate higher than the
22 national average in the late 2008, '09, '10, '11 space, we
23 did a bunch of things, together with society, and then the
24 veterans unemployment rate of Iraq and Afghan war vets
25 actually dropped down to be now below the national average.

1 That's good. So, if we were able to do it there, with some
2 persistent attention, I think we can do it here, too. And I
3 hope we can make a similar effort, connected to the NDAA
4 this year, to take this really talented, resilient workforce
5 of military spouses and help them tackle the challenge.

6 The bill that I passed, which I hope we'll be
7 discussing during the NDAA, came from stories that I heard
8 around Virginia, and basically kind of falls into four
9 pillars:

10 First, assistance with direct hiring. To the extent
11 that we can use expedited hiring into Federal jobs -- we
12 sometimes do that for veterans -- we can do it for military
13 spouses, too. Often, the best jobs around military bases
14 are other Federal jobs, either DOD civilian or other Federal
15 agencies.

16 Second, training. The MyCAA career advancement account
17 can be used by spouses, but we've found a whole lot of
18 people don't really know about the account. And there's
19 even some uses of it we think we can expand. So, it's one
20 thing to use that account to take a course, to advance your
21 employability, but how about using the account to pay for a
22 credential? If you move from one State to the next and
23 you're a teacher, a real estate agent, lawyer,
24 cosmetologist, and you need to get a new credential, how
25 about using the CAA account to recredential or reregister?

1 Third, counseling. The Military OneSource offers
2 counseling resources for staff -- I mean, for servicemembers
3 and spouses after the transition. But, we heard from a lot
4 of folks that the 6-month availability of these resources --
5 career coaching, counseling -- was just too quick to help
6 some people in the transition. That 6 months comes fast.
7 The transition isn't done. We can extend that for a year.

8 And then, finally, there are transition assets on
9 military bases, Transition Assistance Program, that are now
10 guaranteed access for the military servicemember, but not
11 guaranteed access for spouses. And since transition is a
12 family matter, we think we ought to guarantee spouses access
13 to those resources, as well.

14 There's a lot to it. The nice thing is, this is a
15 matter that I know there's not a partisan issue to. And
16 it's my hope that -- and whether it's tackling it on the
17 readiness side or in the personnel side as we go through the
18 NDAA process this year, this bipartisan idea might find
19 favor with the committee. And, Mr. Chair, I thank you.
20 And, Senator Gillibrand, thanks so much for being a
21 cosponsor of the bill.

22 Thanks for letting me interrupt. And you're actually
23 going to hear from some witnesses in panel 2 who are -- have
24 been very instrumental in helping us realize what we need to
25 do in this area. And I thank them for their help.

1 Thanks, Mr. Chair.

2 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Senator Kaine.

3 Secretary Wilkie, welcome. And we'll then move from
4 right to left on opening statements from the personnel
5 service chiefs.

6 Secretary Wilkie.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT L. WILKIE, JR., UNDER
2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS

3 Mr. Wilkie: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator
4 Gillibrand, and Senator Ernst.

5 As you said, Mr. Chairman, this is a bit of a
6 homecoming for me. And I can never begin to repay the
7 Senators here and my colleagues on the staff for your
8 kindness to me through the years.

9 I also want to thank you for your herculean efforts on
10 behalf of our troops to provide them stable and predictable
11 funding for our operations for the next 2 years.

12 Mr. Chairman, during my nomination hearing, you charged
13 me with making life easier for the men, women, and families
14 who carry our future on their shoulders. And, since my
15 confirmation, I am happy to report that the role of
16 personnel and readiness has not only changed to make that
17 charge real, but it has changed to provide a wider use of
18 personnel issues as we inform the National Defense Strategy.

19 Secretary Mattis first laid out three Department of
20 Defense priorities in the new National Defense Strategy.
21 One is rebuilding military readiness as we build a more
22 lethal joint force. Two, strengthening alliances as we
23 attract new partners. And three, reforming the Department's
24 business and family practices for greater performance. P&R
25 has a role in all of these areas.

1 The Secretary has also given us new responsibilities
2 for the strategic readiness of the force. He has instructed
3 us to address resource gaps in capabilities, readiness, and
4 the capacity to project power in globally contested
5 environments. He has charged us with updating readiness
6 goals in line with the NDS, working with the Joint Staff and
7 services to establish a standardized demand signal to
8 determine the forces essential to address future warfighting
9 scenarios. He has also tasked us with implementing a
10 readiness recovery framework that includes a plan on
11 specific military service identified areas for improvement,
12 such as maintenance, access to training, sufficient
13 manpower, depot maintenance, and the time needed to plan,
14 coordinate, and execute readiness across the services.

15 As I mentioned last year, the Department has too often
16 been caught up in chasing the shiny object, like the new
17 carrier or the new fighter. We have forgotten many of the
18 family issues that make our All-Volunteer Force work. But,
19 we have also forgotten servicemembers on the front line.
20 The front line is where 80 to 90 percent of the casualties
21 occur. It is where the human dimension of conflict is its
22 most bloody. It is a world that is brutal and unforgiving,
23 and a world in which the grim reality now is that the enemy
24 is catching up and exploiting areas of weakness. The
25 Israeli Defense Force experienced that in Lebanon against

1 Hezbollah in 2006. We have experienced it against foes in
2 Iraq and Afghanistan, and now look to a world where threats
3 are proliferating from North Korea, China, Russia, and Iran.

4 Our goal in reassessing the way we carry the fight to
5 deter and, if need be, defeat any enemy is to make sure that
6 our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines get home alive
7 quickly -- and get home quickly to their families. What
8 does that mean? It means no more fair fights. That means
9 overmatching our enemies. That means providing our troops
10 with the same level of investment and scholarly attention
11 that we do with the billion-dollar programs that tend to
12 grab headlines across the country.

13 Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned at my nomination hearing,
14 this is not the military that Chairman McCain and my father
15 joined at the dawn of the Kennedy administration. Yet, we
16 are still faced with policies and procedures in place then
17 to run that force of multiple millions, refreshed each year
18 by tens of thousands of draftees and thousands of ROTC
19 graduates.

20 Today, our military is vastly different. It is
21 comprised entirely of high-quality volunteers. And, as
22 Senator Gillibrand noted, 17 percent of the force is female,
23 many of them serving on the front lines in numbers and
24 missions unimaginable in the days of the Women's Army Corps.
25 Yet, we still rely on a 20-year up-or-out model for

1 servicemembers who are forced to leave the military in their
2 prime. Promotion models often see the bottom performer
3 advanced at the same pace as the frontrunner. Success in
4 the Information Age will increasingly rely on the technical
5 ability of our troops. Their assignment system values
6 breadth over depth of experience. Recruiting is often
7 stovepiped and not reaching a wider audience online. Our
8 servicemembers cannot move freely amongst Active, Guard, and
9 Reserve components to meet changing circumstances in their
10 lives.

11 As part of a holistic talent management strategy, I am
12 working with the services, and will work with you, to ensure
13 that our legislative authorities and policies meet these
14 requirements and the requirements laid out by the Secretary
15 of Defense and the National Defense Strategy.

16 Our families, as I mentioned, are our priority, as
17 well. In my father's day, very few servicemembers had
18 families. Today, almost 70 percent do. For our families,
19 the military health system has been slow to keep up with
20 modern medical advances for conditions like autism, as the
21 Chairman and Ranking Member have often pointed out, and
22 other behavioral disorders. The Department will continue to
23 enhance and provide DOD support for military families with
24 special medical or educational needs through the ongoing
25 Exceptional Family Member Program standardization, with

1 oversight and analysis of policy implementation, increased
2 communication of available resources, and continuous process
3 improvement.

4 We still have military families making their medical
5 appointments on paper. And P&R, in accord with the
6 direction of this committee, is consolidating our military
7 healthcare systems into one streamlined and efficient
8 military healthcare administration.

9 Constant rotation, again based on a 19th-century Army
10 model and an issue addressed in Senator Kaine's recent
11 legislation, causes stress on our force. It prevents
12 families from putting down roots, and spouses from garnering
13 meaningful employment. We are mindful of this. We are
14 undertaking a review of ways in which we can mitigate those
15 stresses through greater stability, particularly at large
16 posts, camps, and stations, locations where stability can be
17 balanced with the readiness imperative for servicemembers'
18 professional development.

19 We are also reviewing our childcare service, and will
20 implement strategies to improve access to, and the quality
21 of, Department of Defense-provided childcare across our
22 services.

23 The bottom line is that readiness is holistic, and, if
24 the families are not happy, the soldier walks.

25 Importantly, we have finally provided our members with

1 a comprehensive anti-harassment and bullying policy, as
2 instructed by this committee over 6 years ago. To mark the
3 seriousness of this endeavor, I have instructed the
4 elevation of the DOD Office of Resiliency to include the
5 Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office to be a direct
6 report to me so that it is no longer lost within the layers
7 of the Pentagon's bureaucracy. This office will be
8 responsible for Department policy and enforcement on sexual
9 assault, harassment, suicide prevention, and equal
10 opportunity.

11 Mr. Chairman, the All-Volunteer Force has performed
12 miracles, but certain communities within the joint force are
13 still deploying at a higher rate than desired, and, in some
14 cases, their current deploy-to-dwell rate is not sustainable
15 to achieve our readiness recovery goals. We must address
16 those hard facts or the force will break.

17 One way we address this is to ensure our servicemembers
18 are performing warfighting operations while we rely on our
19 civilian workforce to meet support missions that enhance our
20 military's readiness. To that effort, I am reviewing not
21 only how the Department can optimize staffing at our
22 shipyards, hospitals, and especially our headquarters, but
23 how we can hire the right people to make them accountable to
24 perform at the highest level.

25 Mr. Chairman, this committee has kept faith with the

1 finest military in the world, and the solutions for many of
2 the issues I have mentioned have already begun to be put in
3 place by you. I pledge P&R to continue to build upon your
4 work and help you keep that faith.

5 Thank you, sir.

6 [The prepared statement of Mr. Wilkie follows:]

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1 Senator Tillis: Thank you.
2 General Rocco.
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1 STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL MICHAEL A. ROCCO,
2 USMC, DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

3 General Rocco: Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member
4 Gillibrand, and distinguished members of the subcommittee,
5 thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to
6 discuss your Marine Corps.

7 Your 186,000 marines are the foundation of the Corps.
8 They are the Corps' most critical resource, and always will
9 be. Marines are recruited, trained, and educated, and
10 retained to win our Nation's battles. They are smart,
11 resilient, fit, disciplined, and able to overcome adversity.
12 Marines are warfighters. They are lethal, and they are
13 ready.

14 Recruiting high-quality men and women, and retaining
15 those whose past service and future potential continues to
16 make the Corps stronger and is our highest priority. Our
17 marines ensure that we will be no better friend to our
18 allies and those we have come to help, and no worse enemy to
19 those who oppose us.

20 We will meet our recruiting missions again this year,
21 while, at the same time, exceeding all quality goals. The
22 Department requires 90 percent of marine enlistees to be in
23 the top education tier. We are over 99 percent. We require
24 60 percent of enlistees to be in the highest mental aptitude
25 group. We are over 72 percent.

1 Just as we recruit the best, so must we retain the
2 best. The marines are capable of fulfilling our leadership
3 roles and operational requirements. There is a continuous
4 challenge to keep high-quality marines in the service,
5 especially in the current economy and increasingly
6 competitive civilian job market. This is particularly true
7 for cyber and many of the other high-tech occupations that
8 are of critical and enduring importance. Incentive pays and
9 bonuses remain vital to our retention effort, and we
10 appreciate your continued support. We are open to, and
11 always assessing, new ways to recognize, reward, and
12 ultimately retain quality marines in the Corps. The
13 Commandant's top priority in this regard is to increase
14 flexibility for officer promotions. We believe that this is
15 a simple yet very real and effective way to recognize
16 excellence.

17 We look forward to working with all of the services,
18 the Department, and members of the subcommittee on other
19 initiatives that will enhance personnel quality, readiness,
20 and lethality. We must remain adaptable and consider new
21 ways to recruit and retain the high-tech force we need for
22 the future as we build on the foundation of the quality
23 marines we have today.

24 I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you.

25 [The prepared statement of General Rocco follows.]

1 Senator Tillis: Thank you.
2 General Grosso.
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1 STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL GINA M. GROSSO, USAF,
2 DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MANPOWER, PERSONNEL AND SERVICES

3 General Grosso: Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member
4 Gillibrand, Senator Ernst, thank you for the opportunity to
5 appear before you today to deliver the United States Air
6 Force's personnel posture for fiscal year 2019.

7 Increasing end strength is the Air Force's number-one
8 priority to accelerate readiness. We appreciate the FY18
9 National Defense Authorization Act's support for continued
10 end-strength growth to 675,000 total force airmen. This
11 growth allows the Air Force to compete, deter, and win in a
12 more competitive and dangerous international security
13 environment. The Air Force's FY19 President's budget
14 continues that growth to 680,000 total force airmen. This
15 end-strength growth increases training capacity to address
16 foundational disconnects in the training pipeline. It also
17 funds instructors to boost pipeline capacity and increases
18 intelligence, remotely piloted aircraft operations support,
19 and cyber mission capability.

20 As of October 2017, our total force pilot shortage was
21 approximately 2,000, with the largest shortage in our
22 fighter pilot inventory. The FY19 President's budget
23 continues to address the pilot shortage by funding increased
24 pilot production capacity. This increased capacity assists
25 in rapidly producing new pilots to meet operational

1 requirements. In addition, the budget funds implementation
2 of myriad programs and policies designed to address
3 assignment, operational tempo, and quality-of-life issues
4 targeted to improve pilot retention.

5 The FY19 President's budget increases support to airmen
6 and families through a variety of capabilities that drive
7 mission readiness by focusing on resiliency and retention.
8 The budget increases child and youth funding by \$54 million,
9 for a total of \$114 million. This funding will expand
10 childcare for those airmen needing care outside of normal
11 duty hours, provides fees to support 4,000 children who only
12 have access to off-base childcare, and funds youth
13 resiliency camps. The Exceptional Family Member Program
14 assists more than 33,000 airmen who have special-needs
15 family members. This budget adds 15 installation-level
16 family support coordinators across the Air Force and also
17 funds increasing respite childcare for primary caregivers
18 from 12 to 40 hours per child per month. Taking care of our
19 airmen's children and caregivers removes worries and
20 distractions to allow the airmen to fully focus on the
21 mission.

22 Today's threat environment requires agile and inclusive
23 military and civilian personnel management systems to ensure
24 the Air Force continues to retain the highly skilled
25 talented -- talent needed to defend our Nation. In our

1 enlisted force, we are conducting a triennial review of an
2 enlisted evaluation process following the transition to a
3 new system in 2015. Within our officer corps, we are
4 looking into options to enhance the Air Force's ability to
5 execute the right size and mix of capabilities required to
6 meet and sustain emerging mission demands. We are reviewing
7 multiple initiatives, to include exploring the possibility
8 of modifying our current promotion competitive category
9 structure and establishing technical tracks. We fully
10 support the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act reform
11 efforts; in particular, opting out of promotions,
12 constructive credit, merit-based promotions, and secretarial
13 authority for a small number of spot promotions. We look
14 forward to continuing the discussions with this -- on this
15 topic with you.

16 Our civilian workforce is essential to the Air Force's
17 mission in joint warfighting readiness. Recruiting and
18 hiring top civilian talent is critical to our success. In
19 FY18, we implemented a Premier College Intern Program. This
20 initiative enables the Air Force to recruit top talent
21 directly from college campuses via summer intern program,
22 starting their junior year, using direct-hire authorities to
23 streamline the process. Our target for FY19 onboarding is
24 500 new civilians, and we currently have 450 acceptances, to
25 date. This approach ensures we will leverage the new

1 congressional hiring authorities and stay competitive with
2 aggressive private-sector recruiting.

3 Finally, the Air Force is modernizing information
4 technology infrastructure across our human resource systems
5 to provide exceptional personnel service to airmen and their
6 families. In a digitally connected world, our airmen
7 deserve the best human resource systems available today. We
8 have a 6-year plan to migrate 115 technology platforms and
9 400-plus applications to the Cloud. As we modernize our
10 information technology platform, we will provide more modern
11 systems for our airmen, and we will enhance our ability to
12 make data-driven decisions.

13 In conclusion, we ensure -- we must ensure our airmen
14 have the resources, training, and tools to compete, deter,
15 and win in an increasingly complex world. We are committed
16 to prioritizing and resourcing what is most important to
17 make the Air Force more ready and lethal. We welcome the
18 opportunity to partner with Congress in our endeavors to
19 protect and defend our Nation.

20 I thank you for your continued support, and I look
21 forward to your questions.

22 [The prepared statement of General Grosso follows:]

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1 Senator Tillis: Thank you.
2 Admiral Burke.
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1 STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL ROBERT P. BURKE, USN, DEPUTY
2 CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS, N-1

3 Admiral Burke: Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member
4 Gillibrand, and distinguished members of the subcommittee,
5 thank you for the opportunity to represent the men and women
6 of the United States Navy. The stalwart support for them
7 and their families continues to have a profound impact on
8 the health of our force today.

9 Global demands on the Navy continue to grow. We must
10 continue to recruit, develop, and retain the highly skilled
11 workforce needed to meet the growing demands of our naval
12 forces.

13 Our force structure is expected to grow as we build the
14 navy the Nation needs, which will require increasing end
15 strength. As we grow, our need for highly talented people
16 increases. At the same time, propensity to serve is
17 declining, and each of the services, as well as the civilian
18 sector, are vying for the same limited talent pool. We are
19 clearly in a war for talent.

20 Current forecasts, based on leading economic
21 indicators, suggest difficult times ahead. Labor market
22 factors may pull sailors with critical skills into the
23 growing civilian job market. We took note of these
24 indicators and initiated preemptive action to retain these
25 sailors using all available policy levers to posture us to

1 meet this anticipated growth. Despite this, we just made
2 our FY17 end-strength targets. This year's trajectory is
3 good, but we will require steady and reliable funding, going
4 forward, to stay on track. The new 2-year budget is great
5 news for us and is an excellent step in that direction, and
6 we are very appreciative of your work on that.

7 While recruiters experienced challenges last year, the
8 increased FY18 recruiting mission will be even more
9 difficult, as certain fields are in short supply. And our
10 projected growth profile requires a balanced approach of
11 accessions increases as well as retention improvement.

12 While aggregate retention remains high, the new fields,
13 special warfare, advanced electronics, aviation, and cyber
14 demand close attention. Targeted bonuses continue to be the
15 most cost-effective monetary tool in addressing retention
16 challenges. But, we're aggressively applying a combination
17 of monetary and nonmonetary incentives, with good effect.

18 Toward that end, we continue to implement and expand
19 our Sailor 2025 Program, a dynamic set of over 45
20 initiatives that work to provide today's sailors and their
21 families the choices, flexibility, and transparency they
22 expect and deserve. And combined with our manpower,
23 personnel, training, and education enterprise transformation
24 efforts, we will provide these programs to our sailors with
25 a renewed focus on customer service through streamlined,

1 efficient businesses processes and systems. And we will
2 also better meet the needs of our fleet commanders through
3 agility, responsiveness, and use of predictive analytics to
4 be the pillar of stability in an uncertain world.

5 We're moving out now with purpose and a committed sense
6 of urgency on these initiatives. And we also remain
7 actively engaged in your Department's review of officer
8 management policies. And we are very grateful for the
9 subcommittee's interest in a committed partnership in
10 modernizing DOTMA to meet the future needs of each of the
11 services.

12 I look forward to your questions, and thank you.

13 [The prepared statement of Admiral Burke follows:]

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1 Senator Tillis: Thank you.
2 General Seamands.
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1 STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL THOMAS C. SEAMANDS,
2 USA, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, G-1

3 General Seamands: Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member
4 Gillibrand, distinguished members of the committee, thanks
5 for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of the
6 men and women in the United States Army.

7 I've submitted a statement for the record, and would
8 like to highlight a few of the points now.

9 Manning our Army is one of the key components of
10 readiness and is vital to our Army's ability to win -- fight
11 and win our Nation's wars. Thank you for the Fiscal Year
12 2018 National Defense Authorization Act, which authorized
13 the total Army end strength to increase by 8,500. We also
14 appreciate the 2-year budget agreement. These will help us
15 improve readiness and ensure your Army is fully manned in
16 its formations in the coming years.

17 To build a future Army, we must recruit diverse men and
18 women from high -- of high quality and high character in a
19 competitive market, where only one in seven -- one in four
20 of the 17-to-24-year-olds in the Army -- or in the Nation is
21 eligible to join the Army, and only one in eight has a
22 propensity to enlist in the military. Our recruiters across
23 the Nation are doing a great job and working hard to achieve
24 the mission.

25 The Army must also continue to retain the most talent

1 soldiers and noncommissioned officers with the experience
2 and skills necessary to meet our future needs. We project
3 historic retention rates again this year for our NCOs.

4 The Army leadership has embraced talent management as a
5 cornerstone of how we retain our best NCOs and best
6 officers. The Integrated Pay and Personnel System Army, or
7 IPPS-A, will be the keystone in the archway of talent
8 management. IPPS-A will bring a responsive system that
9 connects all three components and builds a marketplace for
10 talent. We are a standards-based team in the Army, and the
11 Army remains committed to giving all soldiers who can meet
12 the standards of a military occupational specialty the
13 opportunity to serve in that speciality.

14 Last year, the Army integrated the gender-neutral
15 physical standards for initial-entry training and job-
16 specific training, and the initial results are very
17 positive. We have successfully assessed and transferred
18 more than 600 women into the previously closed occupations
19 of infantry, armor, and field artillery. The opportunities
20 are so popular, we're expanding the programs next year.

21 As part of the total force, the civilians are vital to
22 and comprise about 22 percent of the total personnel. We
23 need a civilian workforce that has critical and unique
24 skills to support the soldiers and families. As we build
25 our force, we focus on areas that provide the foundation for

1 our future. We remain focused on personal resiliency and
2 suicide prevention with world-class programs for our
3 soldiers, civilians, and family members. Sexual harassment
4 and sexual assault retaliation are not compatible with Army
5 values, and they diminish our readiness. Therefore,
6 combating all forms of sexual misconduct remain a top
7 priority in the Army. Although optimistic about the
8 progress we've made in reducing sexual violence in the
9 ranks, we understand there's much more work to be done as we
10 drive toward zero.

11 You've authorized us to grow, and we thank you for
12 that. We must be -- ensure that the force is ready. The
13 Army has improved personal readiness by increasing the
14 number of deployable soldiers. We also have an ongoing
15 review to see how we can increase the number of deployable
16 soldiers even more in order to enhance readiness.

17 Because we care for soldiers as they prepare for life
18 after the service, the Army Soldier For Life Program, with
19 support from commanders and command sergeant majors, has
20 resulted in increased educational employment opportunities
21 for Army veterans and family members, and a significant
22 reduction in unemployment cost.

23 Additionally, I appreciate that -- you beginning the
24 discussion on a review of DOTMA to determine what's
25 essential and should be retained and what needs to be

1 updated. Our Army is strong because of the courage and
2 commitment of our soldiers, civilians, veterans, and family
3 members who serve our Nation. And I thank you for your
4 continued support of the All-Volunteer Army.

5 [The prepared statement of General Seamands follows:]

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1 Senator Tillis: Thank you all.

2 Secretary Wilkie, the -- you and I have had this
3 discussion on a number of occasions, and thank you for your
4 time this week in your office. I'm curious about the
5 medically nondeployable population. And I'd like you to
6 talk a little bit about the number who are in that category
7 today, some of that which is expected, and some of that
8 needs to change. And any steps you've already taken, or
9 steps in the future you intend to take.

10 Mr. Wilkie: Yes, sir.

11 Today, I will be releasing a -- the new Department of
12 Defense policy on military retention. The situation we face
13 today is really unlike anything that we have faced,
14 certainly in the post-World War II era. On any given day,
15 about 13 to 14 percent of the force is medically unable to
16 deploy. That comes out to be around 286,000 soldiers. In
17 September -- I mean, in July of this year, Secretary Mattis
18 tasked Personnel and Readiness with developing policies to
19 ensure that everyone who comes into the service, and
20 everyone who stays in the service, is worldwide deployable.
21 The way I described it in our conversation is, if Mr. Bezos,
22 in Amazon, walked in to Christmas week, and 14 percent of
23 his workforce could not perform their duties, then he would
24 no longer be the largest company in the world.

25 There are several issues that -- there are several

1 aspects of nondeployability that are on us. And I was going
2 to -- I was hoping that Senator Ernst would stay, because we
3 could talk about our experiences as junior officers. If, in
4 our small units, our commanders discovered that half of our
5 troops were not medically ready because they had not visited
6 the dentist, that would have been on us. We would have been
7 accountable, as junior leaders, to make sure that they've
8 visited the dentist to become dentally ready to deploy.
9 That's a mission for us.

10 The other thing that we have seen is that, in a -- the
11 down years, in terms of recruiting for the military, we
12 offer too many medical waivers to get into the service. The
13 medical conditions that those servicemembers had when they
14 received those waivers followed them into the service as
15 they progressed through their careers. And we have to
16 address that.

17 This new policy is a 12-month deploy-or-be-removed
18 policy. However, there are exceptions to it. Does not
19 apply to pregnancy. Does not apply to postpartum
20 conditions. Medical boards will review the medical status
21 of those who have been wounded. And I will use a personal
22 example from 1970. My father was severely wounded in the
23 invasion of Cambodia, spent a year in an Army hospital. A
24 determination was made by a medical board then that his
25 service was still required, and he was allowed to recover

1 and return to Fort Bragg in the 82nd Airborne Division.

2 Those are the things that we will take into consideration.

3 But, we need to look at the force holistically. We
4 have to ensure, given the climate that this country faces,
5 that everyone who signs up can be deployed to any corner of
6 the world at any given time. And that is the reason for the
7 change in policy.

8 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

9 In the next panel, we're going to hear from military
10 families and groups representing them. The one thing that I
11 hear consistently is that the frequent relocations creates a
12 great disruption to the family, to employment, a number of
13 other things. So, maybe starting with General Seamands,
14 we'll just move down the line to the services' personnel
15 chiefs. What specifically is your service doing to address
16 the concerns for the Permanent Change of Status flexibility?

17 General Seamands: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Dr. Esper, Secretary of the Army, as he's gone around
19 and had townhalls with soldiers, hear the same comment that
20 you've made and ask how they can stay at a place longer.
21 And so, he's asked us to go back and take a look at not only
22 how -- if we can reduce the PCS, in terms of the monetary
23 cost of the PCS, but also provide stability to the soldiers
24 at those installations. And we're, right now, trying to
25 peel back the onion to find out where you can keep somebody

1 in place longer to allow stability for them, and perhaps
2 continued employment for their spouse, because, if the
3 spouse is employed, they'll want to stay where they are, as
4 well.

5 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

6 Admiral Burke?

7 Admiral Burke: Yes, sir. One of those nonmonetary
8 retention incentives and -- I mentioned, was our detailing
9 marketplace, which is sort of a linked-in for the Navy,
10 allows sailors to connect directly with prospective jobs,
11 communicate their desires, negotiate. But, the marketplace
12 aspect of this is to view, sort of, not just their orders,
13 but total next assignment, in terms of a total compensation
14 package. And geographic stability can be part of the
15 conversation, when it's possible. Career progression, ship
16 type, where those ship types are home-ported, where they are
17 in their career, may make that impossible.

18 But, through use of those techniques over the last 2
19 years, we've been able to increase the numbers of
20 assignments systematically, so up to around 25 percent of
21 our next career moves have been same home port for our
22 sailors. So, we're increasing it. We may be approaching
23 our limit, here, just based on where our ships are home-
24 ported. But, we're trying to expand that as much as
25 feasible. And so one of the market dynamics and the

1 detailing process are -- are defining that for us. It's
2 been interesting to watch.

3 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

4 General Grosso.

5 General Grosso: Mr. Chairman, we're doing several
6 things. We also have leveraging technology with a
7 optimization model that will let people put their desires in
8 and let the -- let them see the requirements, put their
9 desires in. And we think leveraging technology will make it
10 easier to -- people that want to move, to move; and people
11 that want to be stable, to be stable. So, we think that --
12 we are just testing -- we tested it, and we're slowly
13 incrementing that across the officer force.

14 We also, for certain career fields, have implemented a
15 second assignment in place. That's one of our pilot
16 retention models. But, what you find is that the overseas
17 rotation pulls people overseas. And so, some of the force
18 structure makes it difficult to keep people in place. But,
19 we are certainly trying that. And certainly some number is
20 completely possible to do.

21 And the final thing I would add is that I think some of
22 the DOTMA flexibilities that we've talked about -- one in
23 particular, opting out of promotions -- because I've had
24 both -- from a female retention survey, there are people
25 that would like to stay in place, but, because of the career

1 progression forced by an up-or-out system, they really
2 can't. And so, I think, with some DOTMA flexibility, I
3 think you could keep families in place longer, in the same
4 position. And we'd obviously have to think about how to
5 manage that, but I think that would be one huge benefit of
6 some DOTMA flexibility.

7 Senator Tillis: General Rocco.

8 General Rocco: Senator Tillis, the Marine Corps, the -
9 - prior to executing Permanent Change of Station orders, we
10 have monitors, the person in the loop that talks to each
11 marine before they are issued orders to wherever they may
12 be. And so, what we try to do is, we take into account the
13 spouse's situation and the family situation, in whole. We
14 support any effort to protect their ability to have jobs or
15 protect their jobs.

16 The other initiative we have -- and we just submitted
17 recently, within the past few months -- is to reduce the
18 time that unaccompanied tours for married members will have
19 overseas. We're reducing that from 2 years to 15-to-18
20 months. So, that's another initiative to try to keep the
21 families stable and have the member go unaccompanied
22 overseas at a less-than-a-2-year-time period. But, we
23 support any initiatives that would protect the spouse.

24 But, we do have marines that are in the loop for every
25 change-of-station orders that we provide, and we try to

1 mitigate that by keeping them stable or moving them to an
2 area both fits the Marine Corps and the family desires.

3 Mr. Wilkie: Mr. Chairman, may I add to that?

4 On February 8th, Secretary Mattis signed a directive
5 placing me in charge of what he calls his Close Combat
6 Lethality Task Force. And certainly the primacy of the
7 family and the stability of the family is what P&R has had
8 as its prime directive for many years. But, the Close
9 Combat Lethality Task Force looks to the cohesion of the
10 Marine Corps and the Army's front-line close-combat units.
11 Cohesion throughout our history, stability, in terms of the
12 years that a team spends training with each other, is the
13 key to survivability on the battlefield. So, when you look
14 at a place like Fort Bragg, or when you look at a place like
15 Camp Lejeune, the goal of the Task Force, working with the
16 two services, will be to find those formulas that allow
17 those infantry units to stay together longer, provide their
18 NCOs and their junior officers with deep familiarity with
19 the soldiers and the marines that they lead, and, in the
20 end, as they lead those units to actually populate larger
21 command structures.

22 But, family stability is a key to unit cohesion. And
23 unit cohesion is a key to survivability on the battlefield.

24 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

25 Ranking Member Gillibrand.

1 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

2 Secretary Wilkie, last month you put out a harassment
3 policy that once again includes gender identity as a
4 protected class, yet there are reports that the Department
5 plans to change its policy towards transgender
6 servicemembers in the coming months. How will you ensure
7 that this policy abides by the Department's own
8 classification on gender identity as a protected class?

9 Mr. Wilkie: Well, first of all, Senator Gillibrand, my
10 commitment to you, when I had my confirmation hearing, was
11 that the dignity of all servicemembers is paramount in
12 anything that I do, both in my job as Under Secretary, but
13 also in my other life as an Air Force reservist. The only
14 thing I can say about the policy that is being discussed
15 within the Pentagon is that it's predecisional. The
16 Secretary is looking over the recommendation of the panel
17 that you mentioned, and is on track to report that
18 recommendation to the President.

19 But, I will also note that my office is carrying out
20 four -- the orders of four separate courts across the
21 country that keeps in place Secretary Carter's transgender
22 policy. We are assessing transgender Americans, in accord
23 with that policy, and the services are complying with their
24 particular needs as they move through the ranks.

25 So, right now, there is absolutely no change from a

1 policy that was laid out in 2016. But, again, my one
2 commitment to you is that dignity is a foundational issue
3 for all of us, and I will do my best to ensure that that is
4 maintained throughout the force.

5 Senator Gillibrand: I was listening intently when you
6 talked about the new nondeployability policy. Do you think
7 this is going to impact transgender servicemembers?

8 Mr. Wilkie: Well, I will say that, with 286,000
9 Americans who are now listed as nondeployable, I don't think
10 that there's any particular group that would be unaffected
11 by a close scrutiny of our standards for deployability.

12 That is not aimed at any group of Americans who are serving.
13 That is an across-the-board standard that will apply to
14 everyone when it comes to being able to fulfill the
15 Secretary's mandate that everyone be worldwide deployable.

16 It is a staggering number. And, in this world where
17 the forces are at a premium and, as you mentioned, we are
18 struggling to maintain the ranks, we need to get a grip on
19 this. As I said, some of it is on us, some of it has to do
20 with our training and fitness programs, which I think we
21 need to address and bring them up to 21st-century standards.
22 But, those numbers are not -- those numbers do not indicate
23 the success or failure of any one group. It is across the
24 board.

25 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

1 For each of the services, I'd like an update on three
2 things. And you can -- I only have a minute or two, so do
3 your best to be concise.

4 Combat integration. Can each of you provide an update
5 on the status and implementation in your respective
6 servicemember? And can you explain how your service has
7 adapted recruiting practices or strategies to attract female
8 candidates? And what strategies have you employed to ensure
9 the effectiveness of combat integration?

10 And second, if you have time, this issue of intimate
11 partner violence and child abuse. What is the Department
12 doing to prevent such violence against our youngest military
13 children and against our family members?

14 And third, if you can, what specifically are each of
15 your services doing to end retaliation against sexual-
16 assault survivors who report those crimes? And have you
17 actually convicted anyone of retaliation in the last year?

18 Start on the end.

19 General Seamands: Thank you, Senator. Appreciate it.

20 In terms of the combat integration, we're very proud,
21 within the Army -- we have 675 soldiers and officers who
22 have stepped up to the plate, raised their hand and said
23 they want to be infantry armor. We've, so far, had them
24 assigned to units at Fort Bragg and Fort Hood. We believe
25 that the number of people who are in that category is

1 increasing to the point that we can expand it to Fort
2 Carson, Fort Campbell, Fort Bliss, in Italy, for next year's
3 assignments, as they move forward.

4 We've had no issues for sexual assault or sexual
5 harassment in those units above the -- what the Army average
6 is. We think the integration has gone very well. It was
7 deliberate, scientific, methodical; slower than some people
8 would have liked, but I think we're very happy with the
9 leader's first policy that we've put in place.

10 Senator Gillibrand: And any update on prosecuting any
11 cases of retaliation?

12 General Seamands: Ma'am, I'll have to take that for
13 the record, but I believe there's at least one case where
14 there is a prosecution.

15 Senator Gillibrand: Will you submit that to me? And
16 then, also add status of child abuse and spousal abuse, if
17 you could submit that, too. Thank you.

18 General Seamands: Absolutely.

19 [The information referred to follows:]

20 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Gillibrand: Vice Admiral?

2 Admiral Burke: Senator, on the women integration with
3 respect to the recruiting efforts, immediately after the
4 remaining career fields were opened, which, for us, was
5 predominantly Special Forces, Navy Special Warfare, SEALs,
6 we overhauled our recruiting page, our recruiting efforts,
7 redesigned them to depict women in those roles, and then
8 actively reached out to, you know, public events and things-
9 - X-game events and things that would, you know, attract
10 folks interested in those types of career fields. And we've
11 been continuing to seek them out.

12 One of our predominant ways of entry into the SEAL
13 program is folks that are already in Recruit Training
14 Command or at the Naval Academy. So, there's -- or NROTC --
15 so there's already an internal Navy program for attracting
16 folks to apply into that. So, we also strengthened those
17 programs, as well.

18 To date, we've got -- we had -- we have one woman that
19 will start on Special Warfare Combat Crew training, enlisted
20 in May. So, she's in her delayed entry program. And
21 there's a training program to help every SEAL prepare for
22 the special training that they go through. This is not
23 something special for women. But, she's in that training
24 program and her delayed entry program right now. And there
25 is a Naval Academy first-class midshipman that has expressed

1 interest. She's passed the physical screening test and may
2 apply. She has not applied yet. But, if she does, she
3 would be eligible to go through additional screening this
4 spring and summer. So, that's the extent of the interest
5 there.

6 The submarine force integration continues to go well.
7 We have 18 crews integrated. That's six SSGN -- I'm sorry -
8 - six SSBN crews, eight SSGN crews, and then four SSN crews.
9 That's with officers. A total of about 79 -- right around
10 there -- 79 women officers. And now 99 enlisted women on
11 two SSBNs. We just finished the application process for the
12 third SSBN. Additional SSBN application processes will open
13 soon. We'll finish with those about 2021. And then the
14 first SSN which was designed with the berthing compartments
15 designed for women will come online in about 2021. And,
16 from that point forward, all submarines will be integrated
17 with women, going forward. Women are doing just absolutely
18 wonderful in the submarine force.

19 Senator Gillibrand: Mr. Chairman, since I'm over my
20 time, why don't we defer to the next round to complete the
21 rest of the answers for the services so that Liz can go.

22 Senator Tillis: That means, Generals Grosso and Rocco,
23 get ready to answer that question after Senator Warren --

24 [Laughter.]

25 Senator Gillibrand: And the other two, that Vice

1 Admiral Burke didn't answer yet. So, we'll come back to it.

2 Thank you.

3 Senator Tillis: Senator Warren.

4 Senator Warren: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

5 And thank you, Senator Gillibrand.

6 Thank you, to our witnesses, for your service, and
7 thank you for being here today.

8 Admiral Burke, you and I had a very interesting
9 conversation in my office last week, and I'd like to revisit
10 it with your fellow personnel chiefs. We talked about new
11 ways of thinking about an individual's life cycle in
12 service, including potentially making it easier for someone
13 who has to leave military service for either personal or
14 professional reasons to be able to return to uniform later
15 in life. And, Admiral Burke, I know you're interested in
16 piloting that concept. Rather than up-or-out, you were
17 talking about up-and-return.

18 So, I'd like to ask the other services, Do you also
19 think there's value in opening up opportunities to
20 individuals who have left the military but might be
21 interested in returning? And can you just say a brief word
22 about what you see as the pros and cons of that?

23 General Rocco, could I start with you?

24 General Rocco: Yes, Senator Warren, thank you. And
25 that's an important question.

1 So, in the Marine Corps, we have -- and I'd be -- our
2 numbers are small, but we have the Career Intermission
3 Program. We currently have about 12 marines that are
4 involved in that. That involves the marine, basically,
5 stopping their time, going out into the civilian world, and
6 then coming back, and then picking up where they left off.

7 We also have the Advanced Degree Program, where they
8 can both go and stay in uniform or they can spend up to 15
9 months, being paid full, and then go get an advanced degree
10 of their like -- of their choosing, and then come back, with
11 no payback. And when I say "no payback," there's a payback
12 in commitment, but there's not a payback in a specific job.

13 Senator Warren: Okay.

14 General Rocco: We have over 300 marines that go to the
15 Advanced Degree Program in -- up in Monterey, but they go
16 back to specific jobs inside the Marine Corps. So, we give
17 them the opportunity to do something possibly in the Marine
18 Corps that they like or go get an advanced degree in a field
19 of their choosing for -- from 12 to 15 months, to go do what
20 they need to do, and then come back into the Marine Corps,
21 with no harm to their career.

22 Senator Warren: Okay. And I take it you like this
23 program, that this program is working well for the Marines.

24 General Rocco: It is working very well for us.

25 Senator Warren: Okay. It may not be quite as far as

1 Admiral Burke was talking about, in terms of out and being
2 able to reel back in, but at least it's a step in that
3 direction.

4 General Grosso, could you say a word about that?

5 General Grosso: Yes, Senator Warren. I completely
6 support that idea. And we do it, to a small extent, today.
7 We actively recruit non- -- we call them prior-service
8 accessions on the enlisted side and on the officer side. We
9 find that we don't actually attract them back, for several
10 reasons, but we do think it's very powerful. You've got an
11 experienced person -- again, we think some increase in
12 constructive credit would help, because, right now, if you
13 come back in, you have to start where you left, but you've
14 got all this additional experience. So, some additional
15 constructive credit may help us attract more.

16 Senator Warren: It's a very interesting point.

17 It's also an interesting point about the kinds of
18 people you may attract, that people, for example, who are in
19 high tech, who are in computing, they learn a lot while they
20 are out, would like to come back, and you'd very much like
21 to have them back, but you may need some flexibility around
22 how you get to attract them again.

23 If you could, General Seamands.

24 General Seamands: Senator, appreciate the question.
25 The Army supports this kind of program. We're actually

1 excited about the opportunities.

2 General Grosso talked about the enlisted force. For
3 the Army, we brought in 68,500 soldiers last year. About
4 5,000 of them were prior service. In other words, they had
5 served before, and want to come back. On the officer side,
6 we brought about 1,000 officers on a call of active duty as
7 the Active Force School last year, where we reached out and
8 invited them to come back. Most of them were Reserve or
9 Guard, so they had to get clearance from their units to come
10 back on.

11 I recall -- I went back to an alumni event one time,
12 and I met a classmate who had gotten out. And my wife asked
13 him, you know, "Do you miss the Army?" And he looked at her
14 and said, "Every day of my life." And so, for a guy like
15 that, it would be wonderful to be able to have a
16 transparent, quick process to bring them back into uniform.

17 You asked for the pros and cons. I think an obvious
18 pro is that you get an experienced individual who comes back
19 in. The con would have to be that they'd have to continue
20 to meet the standards that they met before.

21 Senator Warren: Sure.

22 General Seamands: So -- but I think it's a great
23 program. I think the Army would endorse that and be -- like
24 to be part of it, as well.

25 Senator Warren: Good.

1 Well, Admiral Burke, you started this. Anything you
2 want to add to it? At least you started getting me involved
3 in this. And the idea of piloting it --

4 Admiral Burke: Yes, ma'am.

5 Senator Warren: -- which is what you said you wanted
6 to do, would you like to add a brief word on that? And then
7 I'll go to Secretary Wilkie.

8 Admiral Burke: All right. Yes, ma'am. Well, thank
9 you for the question.

10 The -- I think it has a lot of potential, in terms of
11 the idea of -- we can do this, to some degree, today, but
12 it's very cumbersome, it's very difficult, on the officer
13 side. We piloted this to much greater success on the
14 enlisted side. For example, today we've got around 8,000
15 gaps at sea. We can fairly quickly bring folks back in that
16 were on the Reserve side, bring them back into the Active
17 component, who are enlisted, if they've got the right
18 constructive credit and their skills haven't atrophied, and
19 things of that nature. But, we're filling, you know,
20 hundreds of gaps at sea from reservists that we've brought
21 back into the Active component.

22 On the officer side, it takes months to bring them
23 back, due to some really, you know, kind of outdated
24 scrolling processes that are in the law.

25 But, we eventually would have this idea of Reserve-

1 component/Active-component permeability, the ability to move
2 back and forth, for the reasons that you articulated at the
3 beginning. We're thinking in terms of, you know, a longer
4 career, making our people pyramid narrower at base, so we
5 bring in fewer people, giving them opportunities to move
6 around. But, as importantly, with this commitment to family
7 readiness, which is important to sailor readiness and fleet
8 readiness, we have to let people step off the treadmill
9 occasionally or they're not going to hang out for a 40-year
10 career.

11 So, we've got to have an option to out. So, that
12 option could be into the Reserves for a brief period of
13 time, as long as they could quickly come back in when that
14 life/work balance need is met, or the -- one other
15 alternative will be an up-and-stay, a horizontal career
16 track, where they can keep flying, maybe at a different
17 tempo, go into a research job, whatever it may be. So,
18 these are the types -- we need alternatives to out. And
19 right now, there are none.

20 Senator Warren: Yeah. I'm over my time, but if the
21 Chair will indulge me for just a minute, I'd like to ask
22 Secretary Wilkie, What would it take to do something like
23 that? Does the Pentagon have the authority right now, or do
24 you need Congress to step in and provide more flexibility
25 if-- to make this happen?

1 Mr. Wilkie: Yes, Senator. It would be a combination
2 of the two. I think, for the Pentagon, it would be a
3 cultural issue. And I'll give you an example, then I'll
4 play off what Admiral Burke just said.

5 If we believe in the concept of the total force, then
6 it should be much easier for a servicemember to move amongst
7 Guard, Active, and Reserve components. That also means, in
8 my view, if someone in your Yankee division sees an
9 opportunity in the Active component that he or she feels
10 they're qualified for, they should have every right and
11 every opportunity to apply for those positions in the Active
12 component. Again, this is not your daddy's National Guard
13 anymore, your granddaddy's Guard anymore.

14 So, that -- the answer to your question is, it would
15 need help from the Congress, in some respects, because we're
16 talking about Title 32 and Title 10 on the Guard side. But,
17 we have to rethink the way we use our Reserve component, and
18 that means we have to acknowledge that the family rules that
19 were in existence when these rules were created don't apply
20 anymore.

21 Senator Warren: So, I very much appreciate that. I
22 understand that recruitment and retention is as much art as
23 it is science, but we know that the population that has the
24 ability and the propensity to serve, and particularly in
25 leadership positions, is a narrow group. And figuring out

1 how best to tap into that group and make them an ongoing
2 part of our military seems crucial to building and
3 strengthening the kind of fighting force we need.

4 So, I appreciate your thoughts on this. I really like
5 the idea that we look at some nontraditional approaches and
6 recognize how other changes impact where we are today, and
7 hope that we'll be able to build on that, going forward, and
8 that you get some real support for the flexibility you need.

9 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I apologize for going
10 over.

11 Senator Tillis: Thank you. Great questions.

12 Senator McCaskill.

13 Senator McCaskill: Thank you so much.

14 Mr. Wilkie, I think it's great. I've had a chance to
15 review, but not in detail, all of the new sexual harassment
16 policy that's been issued by DOD. My first question is, Why
17 weren't -- civilian personnel and contractors not covered?

18 Mr. Wilkie: My time limit. I made a commitment to the
19 committee that I would move, within 60 days, to comply with
20 the law that you passed 6 years ago. The most readymade
21 avenue to that was to instruct the services, which I have
22 complete authority to do, through the Secretary of Defense.
23 There are about 30 different statutes that govern the
24 civilian component that have to do with union negotiations,
25 in one respect. We are working on that. That is the next

1 step, is to make sure that these standards apply to the
2 entire workforce. And that's 900,000 civilians. But, it's
3 absolutely vital. It's inchoate now.

4 Senator McCaskill: Okay. I just want to make sure
5 that you know that -- I know the Ranking Member and I are
6 not going to go away until we're sure everybody's covered.

7 Mr. Wilkie: Right.

8 Senator McCaskill: Also, what is the standard to
9 substantiate an allegation under this policy? I know the
10 Army uses "preponderance." Is this policy envision using a
11 "preponderance of the evidence"?

12 Mr. Wilkie: I would have to get you a legal answer on
13 that. I will tell you what has changed. And this also has
14 to do with the legal issue that you present.

15 For the first time, we are telling these services that
16 substantiated allegations of harassment --

17 Senator McCaskill: Go on their record.

18 Mr. Wilkie: -- go on the record.

19 Senator McCaskill: Yeah. I'm aware of all that. But,
20 that doesn't help me if I don't know what "substantiation"
21 means.

22 Mr. Wilkie: Right.

23 Senator McCaskill: So, I've got to know --

24 Mr. Wilkie: I will --

25 Senator McCaskill: -- that "substantiation" is a

1 "preponderance," is it "clear and convincing"? I mean,
2 these are really important considerations. And I'm sure
3 someone has -- knowing how thorough you guys are when you do
4 one of these new things, I'm sure this has been in the works
5 for a long time.

6 Mr. Wilkie: Yeah.

7 Senator McCaskill: This discussion has been had, and
8 this committee needs to know what standard is going to be
9 used for "substantiation."

10 Mr. Wilkie: Yeah. Well, I can say that, with the
11 reporting requirement on the efficiency report, that could
12 be, in the Navy, a captain's mess, where someone has been
13 convicted of something. And it runs that legal gamut. So,
14 it's -- if a body or an officer has concluded that another
15 member has committed an infraction or a crime, that officer
16 puts that on that individual's efficiency report. In my
17 experience as a junior officer, nothing gets anyone's
18 attention quicker than knowing that the career is on the
19 line and that people are watching. And I think, as we have
20 had this national conversation and as it impacted the
21 military, we've lost that fundamental military lever of
22 enforcement.

23 Senator McCaskill: Well, you know, I -- that's all
24 great, but we still have a problem, in that we don't know
25 what the standard is. Because what's going to happen here

1 is, you're going to have a he-said/she-said about whether or
2 not it was harassment. And then somebody's going to have to
3 determine whether it's substantiated, which is going to mean
4 corroboration, it's going to mean other evidence that might
5 be surrounding the incident, it's going to mean interviewing
6 a number of personnel. And, at the end of it, whoever is in
7 charge of deciding whether it's substantiated or not has to
8 know what the standard of proof is.

9 So, this needs to be clearly delineated. And if you
10 haven't done it yet, if we're going to have a different
11 standard in every branch, then it's a problem. So, we've
12 got to get busy, and you've got to be able to answer that
13 question clearly --

14 Mr. Wilkie: Well --

15 Senator McCaskill: -- with just one phrase.

16 Mr. Wilkie: -- you just answered the question for me.
17 Our instructions are to standardize all of those matters --

18 Senator McCaskill: Okay.

19 Mr. Wilkie: -- across the services. So, there's --
20 and I would have to get -- I'm a recovering lawyer -- I
21 would have to get someone who knows the particulars in the
22 depth to give you the answer --

23 Senator McCaskill: That would be great.

24 Mr. Wilkie: -- answer that you deserve.

25 Senator McCaskill: Yeah. And that's an answer that I

1 think we all need to have. Because, frankly, it's important
2 for everyone to have really clear guidance what the standard
3 is. Because if you start out, and no one's sure, then
4 you're going to have disparate outcomes, and you're going to
5 have a lot of unhappiness, especially if it's going on
6 someone's record.

7 I'm really glad it's going on their record. That's the
8 right thing. That's why it's really important. Every
9 single one of these has to be laid out.

10 And finally, and briefly, if you'd indulge me, if
11 you're not really familiar -- are you as familiar with the
12 UCMJ as perhaps maybe some other witnesses might be?

13 Mr. Wilkie: I have been subject to the UCMJ for many
14 years --

15 Senator McCaskill: Okay.

16 Mr. Wilkie: -- in my other life.

17 Senator McCaskill: So, I just want to clear up --
18 there seems to be some confusion about the way the system
19 works now, in terms of crimes being committed. I want to
20 clear up, briefly, that -- there has been some things said -
21 - and I wasn't there when these were said, but evidently --
22 that gave the impression that prosecutors were not involved
23 in investigating the cases, and that prosecutors were not
24 involved in advising the cases, and that prosecutors weren't
25 the primary source of information for a convening authority,

1 in terms of recommendations, going forward. And it's my
2 understanding that the trial counsel, which is what a
3 military process prosecutor is called, they review, they
4 evaluate, and they advise on the case at every single stage,
5 from the initial phase all the way to the court-martial. Is
6 that correct?

7 Mr. Wilkie: Absolutely.

8 Senator McCaskill: So, any characterization that
9 prosecutors are not involved in investigating and advising
10 these cases is just incorrect.

11 Mr. Wilkie: Yes, ma'am.

12 Senator McCaskill: Thank you very much.

13 Mr. Wilkie: Yes, Senator.

14 Senator McCaskill: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

15 Senator Tillis: Senator Grosso and Senator Rocco, you
16 remember the question you've got to answer?

17 [Laughter.]

18 Senator Tillis: We'll start with Senator Grosso.

19 Senator Gillibrand: Yeah. Senator Gillibrand, ma'am.
20 Clarify for Claire's question.

21 What my understanding is -- not until a decision is to
22 go forward to trial. So, before -- so, we talked to the
23 chief prosecutor at the Air Force, and he said he was never
24 consulted by counsel or by a commander until the decision
25 was referred to trial.

1 Mr. Wilkie: Yeah.

2 Senator Gillibrand: In 20 years.

3 Mr. Wilkie: That -- I don't know the context of what
4 she was speaking. I can tell you that, when any command, if
5 it's a commander who is a commander of a company or a
6 squadron or a battalion, is faced with a legal matter
7 involving one of his troops or airmen or marines or sailors--
8 -

9 Senator McCaskill: Or her troops.

10 Mr. Wilkie: -- or her troops -- that trial counsel
11 from the JAG is his -- not only his legal advisor, but he is
12 also carrying out the details of that investigation. That
13 is my --

14 Senator Gillibrand: So --

15 Mr. Wilkie: -- that's been my experience.

16 Senator Gillibrand: So, I have been told, the only
17 person that consults with the commander is his general
18 counsel -- his counsel. He does not actually speak to the
19 prosecutor until after a decision has been made.

20 Mr. Wilkie: No. That's not my experience.

21 Senator Gillibrand: Okay. Can I have a letter from
22 each one of your services outlining exactly when prosecutors
23 are consulted? Because I talked to the chief prosecutor for
24 the Air Force who did the job for 20 years, and he said he
25 literally was never, never consulted until the decision was

1 made that court-martial -- that it would move forward to
2 court-martial, but never in the deciding phase. And, in
3 fact, his challenge to me was that, once the decision was
4 gone to court-martial, that he would have to go back to the
5 commander every time he wanted to call a witness, and get
6 permission, and that that delay, in and of itself, was
7 problematic.

8 Mr. Wilkie: I will get you a comprehensive answer from
9 the general counsel.

10 [The information referred to follows:]

11 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Gillibrand: Right, about when -- at what stage
2 in the process is the prosecutor engaged, briefed on the
3 case. And I don't think it's before a convening authority
4 is --

5 Senator McCaskill: It -- not only --

6 Senator Gillibrand: -- is called --

7 Senator McCaskill: -- before a convening authority,
8 it's before there's even a preliminary hearing. It doesn't
9 even go to the convening authority until after there's a
10 preliminary hearing at which the trial counsel is engaged
11 in.

12 Senator Gillibrand: So, not --

13 Senator Tillis: Let's --

14 Senator Gillibrand: So, the -- you will give us the
15 briefing. Because I was told that, not until a decision was
16 made that a case would go forward was a trial counsel
17 engaged.

18 Senator Tillis: You've heard the request for the
19 record --

20 Senator Gillibrand: Yeah.

21 Senator Tillis: -- from each of the service lines --

22 Senator Gillibrand: Just to tell us, How does it work
23 and -- for each of the services?

24 Senator McCaskill: And let's figure out a time we can
25 both be there, and have the head lawyer for each service

1 come and sit down with Senator Gillibrand and I so we can
2 clear up what I think are a lot of misperceptions that are
3 being spread around.

4 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you very much.

5 Mr. Wilkie: And, Senator, now you know why Gary
6 Leeling knows a I'm a recovering lawyer.

7 Senator Gillibrand: Yes. Yes.

8 [Laughter.]

9 Senator Gillibrand: Okay, back to the questions we
10 asked.

11 Senator Tillis: And then we'll transition to the next
12 panel.

13 Senator Gillibrand: The Vice Admiral didn't answer
14 about if he's prosecuted any retaliations, and whether he's
15 doing anything on domestic violence.

16 Admiral Burke: Start here?

17 Senator Gillibrand: Yes, go ahead.

18 Admiral Burke: Yes, ma'am.

19 On --

20 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

21 Admiral Burke: Yeah. Domestic violence front, we
22 continue to expand our prevention programs. Deployed
23 resilience counselors onboard our large decks. And we've
24 expanded those out to pierside for our smaller combatants.
25 And those folks are helping with interpersonal-skills

1 training, along with a domestic violence prevention mobile
2 app that we issued that helps enhance training and provide
3 local resources, to include emergency contact information.
4 We're continuing to evaluate private-sector programs that
5 provide research-supported frameworks to help us reduce
6 interpersonal violence.

7 And the child abuse issues, we've expanded and continue
8 to improve our training on our New Parent Support Program
9 service providers. This program has been relatively
10 successful. We take at-risk families and teach them, you
11 know, basic skills, increase the father's engagement,
12 promote parenting resiliency. And, in the past year, there
13 were no reported cases of child abuse or neglect for those
14 high-risk families that participated in the program.

15 And in the High Risk for Violence Coordinated Community
16 Response Team Program, again, for high risk, you know, known
17 possible issues, it has been panning out, as well. That
18 gives us a coordinated community response, local law
19 enforcement, base, police, whatever the situation might be,
20 that are on call, you know, known response force ready to
21 come and protect and assist, you know, actual or alleged
22 past victims, potential victims of domestic or child abuse.

23 We also piloted, in a number of different locations,
24 One Love Foundation facilitators to help with these
25 interpersonal skills, and helping us with -- get to the left

1 of a number of destructive behaviors, but intimate partner
2 and child abuse being among them. And part of that was an
3 assessment tool for how successful was that. And we're just
4 getting to the point where we're going to be able to employ
5 some of the assessment tools to find out how effective the
6 One Love training was for our forces.

7 But, we're continuing to employ some big-data
8 approaches. We've brought behavioral science folks onboard.
9 And we're looking at as many approaches as possible.

10 Finally, CNO established a Four Star Governance Board
11 to look at signature behaviors. Our focus is on, you know,
12 the behavior at the high end of the spectrum. How do we
13 want sailors to behave, with -- you know, we'll continue to
14 focus on prevention, but we want the -- you know, the focus
15 on the winning-team behavior at the high end of the
16 spectrum, as well. We have to do both, not just focus on
17 the pass-fail line. So, domestic violence and suicide and
18 some of these other things are very much at the top of the
19 list of the focus of that Four Star group right now.

20 So, we're bringing as many resources to bear to take
21 some nontraditional looks at trying new approaches, here,
22 rather than just continue to train and hope we get new
23 results.

24 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

25 Lieutenant General Grosso?

1 General Grosso: Senator Gillibrand, reference your
2 question about combat integration, we do have such a small
3 number of positions -- about 1700 -- that we had to finally
4 integrate. These positions are all of our special
5 operations career fields. And, interestingly, we have a
6 challenge recruiting both men and women. And we have
7 actually put a contract for a group of people. Typically,
8 they're -- they hire former special operators, and they help
9 us recruit both men and women. And so, they're going into
10 high schools to find very athletic, intelligent people. So-
11 - but, it's a challenge for both men and women.

12 We have -- and we also recruit within the force. So,
13 we have had 12 women enter the program; and, unfortunately,
14 we have none that have passed the physical exam. And, in
15 fact, we had just one eliminated yesterday for a knee
16 injury. And so, I think we're certainly trying hard, but,
17 unfortunately, we haven't gotten a woman to go through. And
18 I think some of -- the thing you discussed earlier about the
19 health of the population -- women are less -- even less
20 available than men in that young population. So, I think
21 that's something that we have to look at.

22 Reference your questions about child abuse, you know,
23 unfortunately for the Air Force, since FY13, we've had a
24 rate per thousand that's been fairly stable, so about 4 rate
25 per thousand. And so, we've really been looking --

1 targeting the leadership, both in training -- both on the
2 officer -- on the commander side and on the senior enlisted,
3 to recognize signs and to encourage people to seek help.
4 So-- and not to have a barrier to help. And, just like
5 Admiral Burke discussed, we've had tremendous success with
6 our New Parent Support Program. And our data shows us that
7 99 percent have not reoffended.

8 We are rolling out a new program, as well, that's going
9 to target couples that have already experienced some form of
10 violence, and trying to -- trying to help them understand
11 the dynamic of that, to also bring down this -- child abuse.

12 And then, finally, I will say that the work that we're
13 doing on our sexual assault prevention, just on prevention
14 in general, and healthy life skills work that's ongoing, I
15 think will also tangentially have an impact on this
16 challenge for us, as well.

17 And I will get you your answer on -- I don't know the
18 answer on retaliation, but I'll get that.

19 [The information referred to follows:]

20 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Gillibrand: So, even the services -- tell me,
2 how is it going? Like, have we prosecuted any yet? If we
3 have a rate so high, we need to start prosecuting it as the
4 crime that it is.

5 General Rocco: Ranking Member Gillibrand, for the
6 Marine Corps, your first question, about fields -- all the
7 occupational fields are -- currently are open to female
8 marines. We have over 300 female marines that are in
9 previously closed units.

10 For female recruiting, Marine Corps Recruiting Command
11 has focused their efforts to recruit females at colleges
12 through sports programs, and high schools through the sports
13 programs. So, they've emphasized that, and focused their
14 efforts in trying to open up some avenues that were
15 previously closed.

16 For retaliation, it's not tolerated. We investigate
17 them fully. I don't have the numbers on what exactly --
18 what are the results of it, but I know, a number of them,
19 senior officers are under currently -- investigation -- open
20 investigations on retaliation.

21 For family member violence, we have the Family
22 Assistance Program. This is at all bases and stations.
23 They have a 24-hour help line. And they provide support to
24 the victims. We also provide counseling and legal support
25 to those affected by it.

1 And finally, on the family assistance, when we talk
2 about domestic violence, we incorporate that training and
3 predeployment training, post-deployment training, and all
4 commanders' course and schools -- proficient military
5 schools -- to make sure that the commanders and the senior
6 leaders are aware of what's out there, what the numbers are,
7 and what's available to help them, marines and the families.

8 Thank you.

9 Senator Tillis: Well, thank you all for being here.
10 And appreciate the member participation. We're going to
11 transfer to the next panel. Thank you for your service, and
12 continue engagement with the committee.

13 [Pause.]

14 Senator Tillis: If we could have the witnesses just
15 come forward. We can come back to order.

16 I'd like to welcome the witnesses. On the second
17 panel, we have Kathy Roth-Douquet, CEO of Blue Star
18 Families; Ms. Kelly Hruska, Government Relations Director
19 for the National Military Family Association; and Mr.
20 Michael Haynie, Ph.D., Vice Chancellor for Strategic
21 Initiatives and Innovation at Syracuse University.

22 Thank you all for being here. And we'll allow up to 5
23 minutes for an opening statement.

24 And we will start with Ms. Roth-Douquet.

25

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

3 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Thank you very much, Senator. And
4 thank you for including us in this hearing.

5 We enjoyed the prior testimony, and we see great
6 movement over the years. And we credit a lot of that to
7 your leadership and the leadership of your staff.

8 Blue Star Families builds communities that supports
9 military families and connects them to their civilian
10 neighbors. We believe that all military families should be
11 able to serve and simultaneously build thriving and healthy
12 families.

13 One way we do this is by performing research and using
14 the resulting data to inform others and to develop our own
15 programs and solutions. Our annual Military Family
16 Lifestyles Survey provides a yearly snapshot of the state of
17 military families. It's released by the Senate and House
18 caucuses on military families.

19 We believe military families are central to the
20 security of our Nation. And they aren't a nice-to-have.
21 They've a component of the force. In the 21st century, the
22 majority of people who serve are married and do have
23 children and will serve over time.

24 Our survey results show that servicemembers and their
25 families have substantial difficulties balancing work and

1 family. And that's especially acute for female
2 servicemembers and female spouses operating in a military
3 culture designed to meet the needs of male servicemembers
4 and their families.

5 Rather than ad hoc measures meant to provide support
6 during periods of acute warfare, military families must be
7 understood as a structural component of the force. Thinking
8 about families in this way makes the country smarter about
9 what it takes to ensure our country's national security and
10 improves the ability of DOD to meet military family support
11 needs.

12 So, when we asked, this past year, what could DOD do to
13 make it easier for you to ensure your family is happy and
14 healthy during your or your loved one's military service,
15 the top things people talked about was operational tempo,
16 which included their ability to take their own leave -- that
17 was an interesting finding, and a top finding -- spouse
18 employment, and childcare. We also saw a central topic this
19 year being the lack of integration in their local civilian
20 communities. And we see that as being a real avenue for
21 improvement.

22 So, some of our key stats is that nearly half of
23 military families said that the amount of time away from
24 family was their number-one concern. Deployments were cited
25 as a top stressor associated with time in the military.

1 Fifty-six percent felt that DOD support services were
2 inadequate to support their children dealing with the unique
3 challenges of military lifestyle. And over time, over a 3-
4 year trend, we've seen servicemembers, veteran, veteran
5 spouse, and post-9/11 veteran subgroups indicating increased
6 rate of suicidal ideation.

7 So, we see some policy actions or solutions that would
8 respond to these. Very much applaud the ideas about
9 reducing family separation, increasing predictability and
10 at-- absences, and increasing dwell time. Can't overstate
11 how much sequestration and continuing resolutions hurt
12 military families because it reduces predictability. Even
13 with the very brief shutdown we had recently, we heard from
14 Special Forces families, from National Guard families, about
15 not having support for families who were wounded in action.
16 People having to go into their own credit cards to get over
17 to Landstuhl to see their servicemembers. Not having
18 support at a memorial service for a fallen special
19 operations person. Hundreds of National Guard not getting
20 their training, not getting their pay. People are living on
21 a very tight leash. And this is real harm.

22 Improved leave benefit and ability to take leave. We
23 need to investigate this further, but, in a write-in
24 response, a number-one problem that people stated was not
25 being able to take the leave that they've earned. This is

1 causing a lot of problems for families. That's no impact on
2 the budget. What's going on there? And can we do something
3 about it?

4 We do believe we need to fully fund and staff the DOD
5 Office of Suicide Prevention because of the increased trends
6 in suicidal ideation we see.

7 Spouse employment. Financial consideration is a key
8 factor in whether or not people stay in the military.
9 Sixty-two percent of our families in this survey say -- said
10 they felt some or a great deal of stress because of their
11 current financial situations. Again, sequestration harms
12 that.

13 In our survey, we had an uptick of unemployment.
14 Twenty-eight percent of military spouses told us that they
15 had been actively seeking work in the last 4 weeks. We saw
16 that went up, because many who had stopped seeking work in
17 previous years, maybe that they have heard more about it,
18 and so they've started looking again. That's a good sign,
19 but we need to help them work.

20 A majority of military spouses earned zero income in
21 2016. A majority of those who did work made less than
22 \$20,000 a year.

23 Not coincidentally, about half of military families
24 have less than \$5,000 in available savings. That's --
25 causes a lot of pain when people transition out. About half

1 of both Active Duty and spouses say that their top obstacle
2 to financial security is spouse unemployment and
3 underemployment. So, we very much support Senator Kaine's
4 Military Spouse Employment Act, and applaud Senator Purdue
5 and the other Senators for joining it.

6 We are interested and asking Federal hiring managers,
7 in addition, to report on why they don't hire military
8 spouses. Seventy-nine percent of military spouses in our
9 survey who applied for positions did not get them. Despite
10 the fact that, since 2014, there is special authority that
11 allows hiring managers to appoint qualified spouses, I think
12 we should ask them why they're not hiring them.

13 We are interested in the idea of legislation that might
14 reimburse States for spouses' -- military spouses' licensing
15 fees so that States can waive licensing fees for military
16 spouses.

17 Childcare continues to be a critical problem. Issues
18 related to children, time away from children or worries
19 about the impact of military life, was the top stressor for
20 military -- for female servicemembers, and their top reason
21 for exiting military service in the next 2 years. We dove a
22 little deeper into the experience of military -- of females
23 in uniform this past year's survey. You may be shocked to
24 hear that the experience of women in uniform is not the same
25 as the experience of men in uniform. And childcare is one

1 of the key reasons. Two-thirds of men said they had
2 childcare to meet their needs, in uniform. One third of
3 women said the same thing. We asked people in dual-military
4 couples. Interestingly, the husband in a dual-military
5 couple did have childcare to meet his need; the female in a
6 dual-military couple did not.

7 A top reason for not working identified by the military
8 spouse respondents were the servicemembers' job demands,
9 which includes the moves and the unpredictability of
10 deployments and training, and then childcare. Both of those
11 were the majority reasons.

12 So, we think that these suggestions -- to increase
13 dwell time, allow military servicemembers to turn down a
14 move for family stability, and allow servicemembers to take
15 leaves of absence for family reasons, particularly for
16 females in the military -- will be critical. The needs of
17 the military and national security have to come first. We
18 certainly don't want to trump those. But, I'm heartened to
19 hear the services feel that this is possible.

20 Female servicemembers aren't nice-to-have, they are
21 need-to-have. To get the qualified people we need to run
22 our military, we have to have that 17 percent, and growing,
23 females. And we have to make military service compatible
24 with them having the kind of American life that other
25 Americans enjoy, which includes having children.

1 We have to expand options for affordable childcare and
2 improve flexible work-hire initiatives so that we can allow
3 military spouses to work under the conditions that their
4 national security mission requires them to work. Military
5 spouses aren't not working because they don't have the
6 skillsets, it's because they need flexible work conditions.
7 Those do exist. We just need better visibility and better
8 cooperation with the military services to allow that
9 opportunity for the outside resources that can help us find
10 these kinds of jobs more possible.

11 We support the progress of the Availability of
12 Childcare for Every Servicemember and Spouse Act, the ACCESS
13 Act.

14 Finally, I do want to mention local civilian community
15 integration, even though it's not a DOD function, per se.
16 But, 70 percent of married servicemembers live off-
17 installation. Seventy-two percent of our servicemembers who
18 responded to our survey were less than 2 years in their
19 current community. So, they're moving very frequently.
20 And, perhaps because of this, the majority of people who we
21 asked said that they do not feel that they belong to the
22 communities in which they live. They don't feel they
23 belong. They would like to feel that way.

24 We asked them, How many conversations have you had with
25 civilians in the last month? Just in bands: 3-6, more than

1 10? Thirty percent said zero. Zero conversations. So,
2 this isolation makes it hard to get jobs, it hurts mental
3 health, it has a direct effect on child abuse and neglect.
4 If you don't have someone you can turn to to help you with
5 your families, that's an outcome. So, isolation from family
6 and friends is a top-five stressor each year that we've done
7 our survey.

8 We think there are things that can be done. We are
9 frustrated by the -- how difficult it is to create public-
10 private partnerships with the Department of Defense, to
11 share the resources that are available to communities, the
12 sea of goodwill that there is for military people. We are
13 interested in exploring the idea of an Office of Strategic
14 Partnership in the DOD, similar to what exists in the VA and
15 has been very effective, to perhaps push some of the
16 initiatives that really are political and not operational.
17 We need a -- to connect the civilians and the military. And
18 having more openness at the community level would help that.

19 As part of the work I did with the Bipartisan Policy
20 Council on Defense Personnel Reform, we suggested asking all
21 young Americans to take the ASVAB, the Armed Forces
22 vocational aptitude test, male and female at 18, a
23 simplified online version. We think having one time where
24 all Americans consider what sort of -- what work they might
25 do in the military, in itself, might break down barriers and

1 might allow us to bring people into the military who don't
2 currently serve. And creative ideas like that are something
3 that we're very interested in this.

4 So, thank you for letting me speak. I apologize for
5 going over my time.

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

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1 Senator Tillis: Ms. Hruska.
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1 STATEMENT OF KELLY B. HRUSKA, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
2 DIRECTOR, NATIONAL MILITARY FAMILY ASSOCIATION

3 Ms. Hruska: Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Gillibrand,
4 and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the
5 opportunity for the National Military Family Association to
6 speak with you today about the readiness of military
7 families.

8 Our statement, submitted for the record, highlights
9 many issues important to military families, and I will touch
10 on a few of them.

11 We thank you for pay raises for the past 2 years at the
12 employment cost index, and we appreciate the President's
13 fiscal year '19 budget submission, which includes a 2.6
14 percent pay raise at ECI. This is welcome news for military
15 families whose purchasing power has been pinched by recent
16 decreases to BAH, increased healthcare costs, and retirement
17 changes. We thank you for your quick work in the fiscal
18 year '18 NDAA to ensure military children with life-
19 threatening conditions have access to hospice services
20 without having to forego curative care and quality-of-life
21 therapies. Your actions not only fixed an urgent problem
22 for impacted families, but it sends a signal to all military
23 families that egregious TRICARE coverage issues will be
24 addressed.

25 We thank you for your dedication to creating meaningful

1 reforms of the military health system, to enhance medical
2 readiness and improve access to care and contribute to a
3 quality patient experience for military families. However,
4 we have concerns about how the healthcare reforms you
5 enacted are being implemented. We urge you to maintain
6 close oversight as DOD implements healthcare reform, and
7 hold them accountable for making improvements and accessing
8 quality a reality.

9 While DOD has made progress in making the Exceptional
10 Family Member Program more consistent across the services,
11 military families need better coordination between the
12 relocation, education, healthcare, and family support
13 elements of the program. We also urge you to adopt the
14 recommendations of the Military Modern -- Compensation and
15 Retirement Modernization Commission, and direct DOD to align
16 coverage under the ECHO program, especially respite care,
17 with State Medicaid waiver programs.

18 Thank you for proving reimbursements for relicensing,
19 recertification for military spouses in last year's NDAA.
20 The day after the President signed the legislation into law,
21 our office and various Facebook pages were lit up with
22 questions on how to apply for these reimbursements.
23 Military spouses are very excited about this new policy, and
24 are anxious to see it implemented. Please hold DOD
25 accountable to the promise.

1 In 2014, the Defense Suicide Prevention Office released
2 a report outlining an approach for tracking military family
3 member suicides. As a response, Congress included a
4 provision, in the fiscal year '15 NDAA, for DOD to track
5 military family suicides. We are extremely frustrated. DOD
6 has yet to release any information to meet this mandate. If
7 we don't know the scope of the problem, targeting solutions
8 is impossible.

9 Part of the job of keeping our current force ready is
10 preparing for transitions, including the transition to
11 civilian life. The President's executive order dated
12 January 9th expanded Military OneSource from 6 months to 1
13 year, post-separation or retirement. Let's make this
14 permanent.

15 We also ask you to ensure that, as the nature of
16 deployments continues to change, as the services increase
17 end strength and military missions evolve, programs to
18 support military families, healthcare and childcare access,
19 and the pillars of military compensation remain strong.
20 Military family and servicemember readiness are inescapably
21 linked. Military families shudder when they hear their
22 servicemember may not have the training or equipment they
23 need to do the job. Servicemembers can't focus on their job
24 if their family is pinched financially because a spouse
25 can't find a job, their sick child can't get a doctor's

1 appointment, or there's no quality childcare available.
2 Programs and services must be responsive, consistently
3 funded, and constantly evaluated as the needs of our
4 military families evolve with the demands of the mission.

5 Thank you for supporting military families.

6 [The prepared statement of Ms. Hruska follows:]

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1 Senator Tillis: Thank you.
2 Mr. Haynie.
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1 STATEMENT OF J. MICHAEL HAYNIE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
2 INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES, SYRACUSE
3 UNIVERSITY

4 Dr. Haynie: Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member
5 Gillibrand, thank you very much for the opportunity to
6 address you today on the topic of military family readiness.

7 I would actually like to use my time to speak briefly
8 on the central role that military families play in our
9 national defense.

10 This year marks the 45th birthday of America's
11 experiment with an all-volunteer military. And, as the
12 volunteer force has evolved as an American institution, all
13 too often the narrative associated with the role that our
14 military families play in our national security has been
15 misplaced, marginalized, and misunderstood.

16 As members of this committee understand, America's All-
17 Volunteer Force assumes a deep pool of eligible volunteers.
18 However, as we heard from the previous panel, today DOD's
19 own estimates suggest that approximately 70 percent of the
20 Nation's roughly 34 million 17-to-20-year-olds are
21 ineligible for military service due to issues ranging from
22 obesity, fitness, and insufficient formal education. At the
23 same time, over the past 20 years, consistently the Nation's
24 youth -- that we have witnessed a decline in the willingness
25 or propensity of the Nation's youth to consider military

1 service. According to the University of Michigan's annual
2 Monitoring the Future Survey of high school students, today
3 less than 12 percent of American youth are even going to
4 consider military service after high school. So, while the
5 Nation's defense rests on the assumption of a robust pool of
6 eligible volunteers, the reality is, today, that assumption
7 has never been more tenuous.

8 All that said, since the advent of the All-Volunteer
9 Force, the Nation's most reliable pipeline of eligible and
10 willing volunteers comes from our military families, the
11 daughters, sons, brothers, and sisters of those who are now
12 or who have served in the Nation's uniform. In other words,
13 one consequence of the All-Volunteer Force has been to
14 create military service as a family business. This means
15 our ability to recruit the best and the brightest to
16 military service in the future depends, to a significant
17 degree, on our capacity to support those families serving
18 today.

19 So, how are we doing? This is an exceedingly difficult
20 question to answer, because, as an academic, I want research
21 and data. And, in that regard, I'd like to highlight to the
22 committee that there is a profound deficit of research
23 focused on the social, economic, and wellness concerns of
24 our Nation's military families. However, what we do know
25 from research conducted by my teammates at Syracuse

1 University's Institute for Veterans of Military Families and
2 by others, to include at this table, suggest that we must do
3 more, and better. And I -- but, I will share some of what
4 we do know.

5 We know that military spouses are exceedingly well
6 educated, as compared to their civilian counterparts, but,
7 as we've heard already this morning -- this afternoon, many
8 experience unemployment at a rate three times higher than
9 their nonmilitary peers. This could be because military
10 spouses relocate ten times more frequently than their
11 civilian counterparts, creating gaps in employment and
12 education and making it nearly impossible to create the
13 security, stability, and community connections required to
14 sustain a career. Those military spouses who are able to
15 secure employment, on average earn 38 percent less than
16 their civilian counterparts.

17 We know that employment and underemployment challenges
18 experienced by military spouses undercut the financial
19 health of our military families. While military families
20 save at the same rate as their civilian counterparts, over
21 one-third report difficulty covering monthly expenses. Only
22 50 percent report a rainy-day fund for available
23 emergencies. And, as Kathy mentioned earlier, a recent
24 survey found that 54 percent of those planning to leave the
25 military within the next 12 months have less than \$5,000 in

1 savings available to support that transition to civilian
2 life.

3 One thing that I think we need to talk more about are
4 our military children. We know that children of the post-
5 9/11 generation have been exposed to unique stressors. Two
6 recent studies demonstrate that military-connected children
7 have higher prevalence of depressive symptoms, sadness,
8 suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts, as compared to
9 nonmilitary-connected youth. While the costs and
10 consequences of the military service experience on military
11 children is a story that will unfold in the years and
12 decades to come, all indications are today the costs and
13 consequences will be high.

14 Importantly, we also know that military spouses and
15 military children are resilient, resourceful, adaptable,
16 entrepreneurial, and engaged in the world around them. We
17 know that military spouses and military children have much
18 to contribute to our communities during and after military
19 service.

20 Finally, we also know that, in recent years, there has
21 been a steady decline in the willingness of currently
22 serving military members to recommend military service to
23 their own children. Today, only 40 percent of those serving
24 indicate that they would recommend military service, with
25 the unwilling majority citing concerns related to the well-

1 being of the family as being one of the primary factors in
2 their decision.

3 All of this is to say that many inside and outside of
4 government have long hypothesized a relationship between the
5 concerns of military families and DOD's ability to recruit
6 and retain the most skilled, qualified, and service-minded
7 individuals. From where I sit today, the data is clear.
8 Investments positioned to care for and support our military
9 families are central to our military readiness and to our
10 national security. Further, these investments are morally
11 and ethically right.

12 It's my hope that the public and the private sector
13 join together to act to make strengthening our military
14 families a national priority, acknowledging that building a
15 prosperous and safe nation for future generations requires
16 that we treat our military families as a treasured national
17 resource.

18 Thank you for your time, and I look forward to your
19 questions.

20 [The prepared statement of Dr. Haynie follows:]

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1 Senator Tillis: Thank you all.

2 Mr. Haynie, I'm guessing that's not a Tennessee
3 Volunteers orange tie you've got on. Is that --

4 Dr. Haynie: Senator, it is not. That is the proud
5 Syracuse orange.

6 [Laughter.]

7 Senator Tillis: A man's got to try.

8 Dr. Haynie: Big game tonight, North Carolina State, up
9 in the Carrier Dome.

10 Senator Tillis: That -- actually, I want to just start
11 with you. And the -- a question I had -- I served in the
12 legislature before I came up to the Senate, and we were
13 constantly trying to figure out how we partner with the
14 States and with the private sector. And, Ms. Roth Douquet,
15 I heard your concern about the DOD partnering not going so
16 well. But, what are you-all's view should we do more --
17 particularly when you have a relatively highly skilled
18 workforce that's grossly underpaid. Some of that probably
19 relates to the relocation rate and just not being able to go
20 and get the credentialing they need in a given new
21 jurisdiction. What -- are there any good examples out there
22 of States or private-sector collaborations that are working?
23 What more can we do there?

24 Dr. Haynie: So, I think one of the things that's --
25 that is interesting to me -- and I'm going to come back to

1 something that Kathy mentioned earlier -- is, we saw the
2 private sector stand up en masse when the veterans
3 unemployment rate hit the 20-25 percent. Collaboration
4 between the private-sector actors and, you know, coalitions
5 of firms 200-300 strong focused on solving the veterans'
6 employment problem. We have not seen that same kind of
7 effort as it relates to military spouses.

8 I do believe that -- for the last 2 years of the Obama
9 administration, I was the vice chairman of the Federal
10 Advisory Committee on Reform at the VA. One of the things
11 that Kathy mentioned, that I think has been transformative
12 relative to the VA's ability to partner with the private
13 sector, is creating a focused effort and office around
14 public-private partnerships. And I agree very much with
15 Kathy's recommendation. And I think that, in this regard,
16 DOD could benefit from that opportunity, as well.

17 Senator Tillis: Ms. Roth-Douquet, do you have anything
18 to add to that?

19 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Blue Star Families helps convene a
20 group of about 55 nonprofits, foundations, and government
21 leaders. And they did all endorse this idea of a -- an
22 office similar to the VA at DOD. I do agree that it takes a
23 sustained effort.

24 Most Americans have no idea this problem exists. And
25 most employers have no idea. And when they hear that it

1 does, they are interested in these talented workers, who
2 actually have health insurance, by the way, so they're
3 pretty attractive employees. But, it takes a big voice, and
4 a bigger voice than we have. So, the work that we're --
5 that we can do with Senators, with States, but also getting
6 the DOD -- this kind of office, can get us to replicate the
7 success that there was in veteran hiring, I think.

8 Senator Tillis: Ms. Hruska, you mentioned, in your
9 opening comments, about, on the one hand, you welcome some
10 of the healthcare reforms, but you did have some possible
11 concerns, or potential concerns, about the implementation.
12 I'd like for you to maybe expand a little bit on that. And
13 I know your organizations also advocated for extended
14 healthcare options for -- healthcare option benefits for
15 military dependents with special needs. So, could you talk
16 a little bit more about what we should be mindful of as we
17 move through some of the changes?

18 Ms. Hruska: Well, we outlined quite a bit of our
19 concerns on the healthcare reform in our testimony. I'll
20 just use one example. We appreciate -- DOD is trying to
21 make the healthcare benefit for military families a little
22 similar to the -- their civilian counterparts. And so, we
23 are starting enrollment periods, and this year is the first
24 year, but the rules are a little lax. So, next January, you
25 will have an opt-in period. I believe that actually will go

1 November to December. And then you must enroll in your
2 healthcare program, starting January 1st. And so, the
3 Department has created qualifying life events.

4 One of -- as we look at those qualifying life events,
5 dissatisfaction with the military treatment facility is not
6 a reason to opt out. And we have particular concerns about
7 this, because you may have a wonderful experience with a
8 military treatment facility, say, here in the national
9 capital region, but you move to another area, you say, "I've
10 had a great experience. I'm going to sign up and go to my
11 military treatment facility," and then you have a very poor
12 experience, and then you're trapped. And you have nowhere -
13 - you have to deal with that one healthcare facility until
14 the next open-enrollment period. And if you have a child
15 that has a particular condition, or if you find -- you have
16 concerns -- you're pregnant, you have concerns about a
17 pregnancy, that can be particularly restrictive. And that's
18 just one -- you know, one issue that we have.

19 Senator Tillis: Well, thank you. We'll certainly take
20 what you expanded on in the written testimony, and any
21 additional information you'd like to submit to the record,
22 as being instructive as we go through the implementation.

23 Ranking Member Gillibrand.

24 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

25 The rate of entrepreneurship in America has grown in

1 the past couple of years. And the -- economy is estimated
2 to be at a third of the U.S. workforce. When considering
3 the barriers that military families face finding work, these
4 avenues may offer a key to increasing employment.

5 Mr. Haynie, can you speak about programs such as Boots
6 to Business and VWISE, which is Veteran Women Igniting the
7 Spirit of Entrepreneurship, and whether the DOD can learn
8 from them, in terms of military spouse employment?

9 Dr. Haynie: Senator, I can. One of my great passions
10 is military connected entrepreneurship. Matter of fact, I
11 am leaving here to fly to Austin, Texas. And, for the next
12 4 days, almost 400 military spouses, military veterans
13 interested in pursuing entrepreneurship will receive
14 training, mentorship, and support through programs that we
15 operate out of the institute. Business ownership is a
16 unique opportunity for this population, both our military
17 veterans as well as our military spouses, to craft a
18 vocation for themselves in a way that accommodates some of
19 the unique challenges, stressors associated with military
20 service.

21 Military veterans and military spouses are over-indexed
22 to business ownership in this country, relative to
23 nonmilitary-connected populations. If you look at --
24 veterans represent about 6 percent of the population, but
25 almost 15 percent of all small business owners in this

1 country. Take women veterans, female spouses that are --
2 VWISE program that you mentioned -- now thousands of women
3 have received training through that program, and they're
4 outgrowing businesses at a rate of -- venture creation rate,
5 92 percent; 5-year survival rate of those businesses, up in
6 the 80-percent range, which is unheard of. So, I think it's
7 a unique opportunity for this population, one that the --
8 the Boots to Business Program and the ability of spouses to
9 take advantage of that has to remain central to how we think
10 about transitioning families out of the military.

11 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

12 Researchers have found that military service adds
13 additional challenges for married couples, which you've all
14 testified to, such as increased household responsibilities
15 for spouses or the impact of psychological effects of
16 service on marital stability. Married volunteers who served
17 in post-9/11 wars were slightly more likely to become
18 divorced during their first 2 years post-service, compared
19 to civilian populations. What can the DOD do better to
20 support military families to address these unique strains?

21 Go ahead, Kathy.

22 Ms. Roth-Douquet: A lot of the ideas about creating
23 flexibility in the life cycle, I think, will go a long way.
24 Allowing -- our current military is millennials. And
25 millennials value stability very highly. They value

1 stability more than they do upward mobility, in fact. So,
2 the opportunity to weigh in on their careers, we believe,
3 would create a lot of strength within the family. So, I
4 think that is an important element.

5 Predictability also would reduce a lot of the strain
6 that creates strains in marriage and creates strains around
7 children and childcare. So, I think the same things that
8 will create more satisfaction in the career, itself, will
9 provide a lot of strength in marriage.

10 I don't think DOD should get into the marriage therapy
11 business. I don't think it's going to be their strength. I
12 think the underlying structure and this partnering with the
13 people whose strength it is, organizations like Taya Kyle's
14 Frog Foundation -- there's a lot of great organizations out
15 there. Let's make it possible for them to do their work.

16 Senator Gillibrand: So, I'm concerned about, not just
17 divorce rates, but also domestic violence rates and suicide
18 rates that you've all talked about today. And, you know, we
19 have our -- every other year, we have the survey of sexual
20 violence in the military, but spouses aren't actually
21 surveyed. And I would really like to either add the spouses
22 to that survey -- and I'd like your thoughts on that -- or
23 create a unique survey to get some of this other data, too.
24 A survey that's conducted by the military and aggregated
25 every year or every other year of issues like divorce rates,

1 suicide rates, domestic violence rates, child abuse rates,
2 so that we actually have real data. And I'd like your
3 thoughts and recommendations on whether we should do a
4 survey that's unique to families or at least add spouses to
5 the biannual survey of military sexual assaults.

6 Ms. Hruska: Our association would prefer to see a
7 separate survey, because domestic violence is sometimes
8 different than sexual assault. And, as the services
9 discussed earlier, especially with the family advocacy
10 program, the outcomes when there is counseling and families
11 work together -- the outcomes are better. So -- and, a lot
12 of times, in domestic violence, you want to see that both
13 partners want to save the marriage and improve the
14 situation. So, I think a separate survey would be
15 beneficial.

16 Dr. Haynie: So, what I'd -- how I'd like to respond to
17 that is to suggest that the more data we have, the better
18 off we are. I chose to emphasize military children a bit in
19 my opening statement, because, honestly, one of the
20 communities that I am most concerned about are our military
21 children. We often look for precedent related to how to
22 think about supporting -- whether it's our servicemembers,
23 our spouses, our children. What we fail, I think, or have
24 failed, to consider is, there is no precedent relative to
25 the past 15 years. You know, I talked about the 45th

1 birthday of the All-Volunteer Force. The past 15 years have
2 been the first extended test of the All-Volunteer Force.
3 And what we understood after Vietnam, even after the -- you
4 know, the first Gulf War, there is no precedent for going to
5 Fort Drum, for example, and talking to a soldier who's been
6 in for 10 years and has been deployed five times. And
7 talking to that soldier's child, who, you know, might be 6
8 or 7 years old, and, for 2 or even 3 of those years, has
9 been without a parent, I -- it's shocking to me that we have
10 not invested more in looking at the impact of these
11 stressors on military children. I think we have to do it
12 over time. Because there is no safety net for them. For
13 the veterans, there is the VA. When families transition out
14 of the military, for those children, there is no safety net.
15 And I think that we will be in for a surprise, as a Nation,
16 as a society, when we come to learn, over time, the
17 implications of the past 15 years for those children.

18 Ms. Roth-Douquet: My grave concern is that we do this
19 in a way that preserves the dignity and respect of the
20 people involved. And so, when I -- when my husband was
21 Active Duty, and I went to see the doctor, they always asked
22 me, "Do you feel safe in your home?" And I always thought,
23 "Gee, are my neighbors who aren't in the military, are their
24 doctors asking them that? And I being targeted because my
25 husband's in the military, and therefore there's a veil of

1 suspicion over it?" So, if there are surveys, I think it's
2 important that we do it in a way that isn't stigmatizing and
3 treating military people as a separate population from other
4 Americans that are maybe somehow suspect. And I say that
5 because who's going to do the survey? Already there's a
6 little bit of distrust with being your husband's boss's
7 boss. So, we have to make sure it's done in a way that is
8 respectful to the people involved, and respectful that many
9 of them --

10 Senator Gillibrand: Would that lend itself, then, to
11 just be part of the regular DOD survey?

12 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Well, I think people -- it's not a
13 popular survey. It gets around a 2-percent response rate,
14 that survey. So, I think that this is another place you
15 want to look at public-private partnerships to have people
16 who are more in tune to the right kinds of questions.

17 Senator Gillibrand: Well, the RAND Corporation does
18 the survey for the Department of Defense, and they implement
19 it. All servicemembers are supposed to fill it out, and
20 then they extrapolate from that an estimate of how many
21 cases.

22 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Right. And I know a lot of people
23 don't take it, or choose not to answer it, because there is
24 a certain distrust about it. I felt it, myself. I felt
25 that distrust about, Was it really private? So, I think

1 this is just the reality that you need to know. When you
2 observe a population, you change it. Right? And so, if the
3 person who's observing is seen as being an official body,
4 you may or may not get the data that you hope to get. I'm
5 offering this as --

6 Senator Gillibrand: It's a tough question.

7 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Right. I do feel --

8 Senator Gillibrand: What is a trusted source, if you -
9 - if you were to design -- if you were trying to get to the
10 data that Michael wants to get to --

11 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Right.

12 Senator Gillibrand: Are these kids suffering? How
13 many kids are subject to child abuse? How many have, you
14 know, suicidal ideation? How many are at risk? How much
15 domestic violence? What's a percentage of divorce? Like,
16 if you want to get to that information -- because the
17 military, unfortunately, doesn't do anything until they have
18 data. And so, if they don't see the problem, they're not
19 going to fix it.

20 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Right.

21 Senator Gillibrand: They just are going to say the
22 problem doesn't exist. And so, I can't fix these problems
23 unless I can prove to the DOD and my colleagues that they
24 exist. And so, I need data to prove they exist. So, I need
25 data, but I don't --

1 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Right.

2 Senator Gillibrand: I obviously don't want data that's
3 not accurate, and --

4 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Right.

5 Senator Gillibrand: -- I don't want it to be used to
6 bludgeon the military, because that's not the point. The
7 point is, how do we protect servicemembers, their families,
8 and their children?

9 Ms. Roth-Douquet: I think that using focus groups that
10 have some engagement with something that looks -- what we've
11 found from people is, they want things from their friends
12 and neighbors, and they want it from popular culture. So, I
13 would work with Sesame Street or something that seems
14 trusted in that way, or -- one of the reasons people
15 answered Blue Star Family's survey is because it's seen as
16 being different --

17 Senator Gillibrand: Maybe we could ask them to do it.

18 Ms. Roth-Douquet: With -- yeah, and we do actually
19 have some data on domestic violence. I think also the --
20 you know, it's --

21 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. And we'd like to work
22 with you offline with our staff. Thank you.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.

25 I want to thank you all for being here. I think it's

1 been a great hearing. We've gotten a lot of information.
2 We'll have a lot more from your written testimony. And,
3 certainly, the question-and-answer has been very helpful.

4 I want to make sure -- Ms. Hruska, I -- the point that
5 you made about getting the information on military family
6 suicide, I've taken a note. We will get an answer to your
7 question and share that with you. I want this to be the
8 continuation of a dialogue as we go into the NDAA. And we
9 continue to work on policies after the NDAA, so you have an
10 open invitation to work with the committee staff and with my
11 staff. And I'm sure I speak for Senator Gillibrand. We
12 want your feedback.

13 I also want to move that any outside statements
14 received in the -- that we include any outside statements
15 received in the official record for this hearing, without
16 objection.

17 Senator Gillibrand: So move.

18 Senator Tillis: So moved.

19 [The information referred to follows:]

20 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 So, thank you again for being here and for your
2 personal and professional interest in this issue. Thank you
3 for your service to a very important population in our
4 community.

5 This meeting is adjourned.

6 [Whereupon, at 5:00 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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