

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

Subcommittee on Personnel

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

**UNITED STATES SENATE**

MILITARY PERSONNEL POLICIES AND MILITARY FAMILY  
READINESS

Wednesday, February 27, 2019

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U.S. Senate

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Subcommittee on Personnel

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Committee on Armed Services

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Washington, D.C.

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The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:32

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p.m., in Room SR-222, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon.

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Thom Tillis, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

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Committee Members Present: Senators Tillis

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[presiding], McSally, Gillibrand, Warren, and Duckworth.

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

3           Senator Tillis: The committee will come to order.  
4 Senator Gillibrand, I've been advised by the staff, is on  
5 her way. And I thought since I have my opening comments,  
6 to make best use of everyone's time, I'll go ahead and  
7 start and we'll recognize the ranking member when she's  
8 here.

9           Senator Duckworth, thank you for being here. I also  
10 know that Senator Scott -- this would be his first  
11 Personnel Subcommittee meeting -- he is actually in Florida  
12 for a funeral and looks forward to coming on this  
13 committee. I want to welcome Senator Duckworth.

14          I've told everybody the reason I like this committee  
15 is it deals with the business of the Department of Defense  
16 and it gives us a lot of opportunities to work on military  
17 family issues, the business of the DOD compensation,  
18 personnel management, and I look forward to working with  
19 Senator Duckworth and the returning members and Senator  
20 Scott.

21          And Senator Gillibrand, I just got started. About to  
22 do my opening statement, and then I'll defer to you.

23          The Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel  
24 meets this afternoon to receive testimony on military  
25 personnel programs and on military family readiness. We're

1 fortunate today to have the services' personnel chiefs  
2 discuss the Department's military personnel programs and  
3 the services' senior enlisted advisors discuss military  
4 family readiness.

5       On panel one, we will hear from Lieutenant General  
6 Thomas Seamands, Deputy Army Chief of Staff, G-1; Vice  
7 Admiral Robert Burke, Chief of Naval Personnel; Lieutenant  
8 General Brian Kelly, Deputy Air Force Chief of Staff for  
9 Manpower, Personnel and Services; and Lieutenant General  
10 Michael Rocco, Deputy Marine Commandant, Manpower and  
11 Reserve Affairs.

12       General Rocco, I was trying to think of what your call  
13 sign was, but I think we'll hold off on that one. I think  
14 you shared it one time.

15       I'll introduce the second panel when we transition to  
16 the testimony.

17       The topics we'll discuss today are vital to the  
18 effectiveness of the All-Volunteer Force. A complex global  
19 security environment requires DOD's military personnel  
20 programs and policies to be agile, adaptable, always  
21 capable of responding to uncertain threats we face. To  
22 sustain our military into the future, these programs and  
23 policies must appeal to our Nation's best and brightest.

24       We also cannot lose sight of the importance of the  
25 military families who support our troops every day.

1 Military families face uncommon stressors and challenges  
2 unlike those of their civilian counterparts. This  
3 subcommittee must understand military families' concerns,  
4 such as military spouse employment and unemployment,  
5 inadequate child care, and unsafe housing conditions.

6 And if I may, just for a moment, depart from my  
7 prepared statement. So we had the hearing on housing  
8 recently. I've spoken with Secretary of Army, Secretary of  
9 the Navy, and Chief of the Army just last night, and I have  
10 meetings scheduled with many others. But what we saw  
11 reported is simply unacceptable. So while this committee  
12 will oftentimes talk about the longer-term strategies, the  
13 authorities within the NDA, there's a very clear  
14 expectation on our part that we figure out what the  
15 short-term remediation strategy is for the despicable  
16 situation we find some of our military families in today.  
17 And I know that there's no daylight between any of us in  
18 the room on that issue. It's a matter of priority and  
19 execution.

20 So we want to work diligently to ensure military  
21 services provide the support that families need. The  
22 readiness of our Armed Forces, and ultimately, our Nation's  
23 security, depends on it.

24 Finally, I look forward to hearing from the personnel  
25 chiefs about their efforts to improve recruitment and

1 retention of military personnel, improve military personnel  
2 and family readiness, prevent sexual assault and  
3 harassment, reduce service member and family suicides,  
4 combat domestic violence and child abuse, enhance child  
5 care services, and improve employment opportunities for  
6 military spouses. And I hope the senior listed advisors on  
7 the second panel will describe what they are doing to  
8 improve the quality of life for military families and take  
9 care of our enlisted troops who comprise the vast majority  
10 of the military.

11 I want to thank all of the witnesses for being here  
12 today and I look forward to hearing your testimonies.

13 I'd also like to let everybody know, as I said  
14 earlier, that Senator Scott, who is very excited to be on  
15 the Personnel Subcommittee -- he's sort of a business geek  
16 like me -- regrets that he is not here, but he will be at  
17 our next hearing.

18 And with that, I'll turn it over to Ranking Member  
19 Gillibrand.

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

3           Senator Gillibrand: Thank you so much, Senator  
4 Tillis, for your leadership and for this posture hearing.  
5 I join with you today in welcoming our witnesses as we  
6 receive testimony on the Department's military personnel  
7 and family readiness programs, which I believe are  
8 absolutely critical to our military readiness, from  
9 improving the condition of military housing to providing  
10 high-quality health care, recruiting cyber warriors who can  
11 meet tomorrow's threats, ensuring access to child care, and  
12 eliminating sexual harassment and assault from the ranks,  
13 personnel issues that directly affect the ability of our  
14 service members to focus on their military duties.

15           I am very concerned by continuing harmful actions  
16 taken by the Trump administration against military and  
17 civilian personnel alike. Thousands of brave transgender  
18 service members continue to serve in our military despite  
19 uncertainty in the fate of their careers. The ranking  
20 member of the committee, Senator Reed, and I have  
21 introduced a bipartisan bill that would permanently lift  
22 the discriminatory ban, allowing transgender individuals to  
23 serve in our military so long as they otherwise meet  
24 military service standards, applying the same standard to  
25 them as is applied to everyone else.

1           And our civilian employees who serve critical national  
2 security functions and allow uniformed personnel to focus  
3 on their military duties have also been under attack. Late  
4 last year, the Secretary of the Army announced that he  
5 would end child care subsidies for civilian employees  
6 effective this Friday, March 1st, plunging thousands of  
7 patriotic civil servants into financial uncertainty.  
8 Additionally, Congress recently rebuked the President's  
9 effort to freeze the pay of civilian employees once again.  
10 The 1.9 percent raise was important, but still below  
11 inflation. Civilian pay has lagged considerably behind  
12 military pay for more than a decade, including a three-year  
13 pay freeze and furloughs despite significant reductions in  
14 the civilian workforce. Continued attempts to devalue the  
15 service of our civilian workforce only harms morale and  
16 decreases readiness.

17           Separately, I hope each of you watched the hearing  
18 held two weeks ago by the subcommittee on the awful  
19 privatization military family housing conditions that some  
20 of our servicemembers are forced to endure. It is shameful  
21 that it takes a congressional hearing to motivate  
22 individuals to do the right thing. The military services  
23 cannot wash their hands of this issue hiding behind deals  
24 signed with the private sector to manage these projects. I  
25 look forward to hearing more about what you're doing to



1 address those shameful conditions.

2 Finally, I want to say a word about our second panel,  
3 the services' senior enlisted advisors. I want to say at  
4 the outset that I value the service of our enlisted  
5 personnel. I remain concerned that more needs to be done  
6 to curb sexual abuse within the ranks and to change the  
7 culture that enables this conduct. This begins with the  
8 noncommissioned officers and leadership, all the way down  
9 to the squad level.

10 I hope you will also tell this subcommittee what more  
11 we can do to support our service members and families,  
12 especially our most junior, to ensure their successful  
13 service.

14 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to all.

15 Senator Tillis: Senator Duckworth, do you have any  
16 comments?

17 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think  
18 that this is one of those issues that is truly bipartisan.

19 I do want to thank the gentlemen for coming and that,  
20 truly, we cannot unlink or break the link between what we  
21 do for our military personnel and their family members in  
22 housing and military readiness. Our guys and gals  
23 downrange need to be secure in knowing that their family  
24 members are taken care of, and we all know that.

25 So I thank the chairman for having this hearing, and I

1 thank you for being here, and I look forward to hearing  
2 your comments and the questioning. Thank you. ]

3 Senator Tillis: Now we'll turn to the witnesses for  
4 opening comments. If you can possibly keep them to five  
5 minutes, we would appreciate it so we can get to questions.

6 We'll start with 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, I thank  
5 you for the opportunity to appear today on behalf of the  
6 men and women of the United States Army. I've submitted a  
7 statement for the record, but I'd like to highlight a few  
8 things at this time.

9           Manning the Army is one of the vital components of  
10 readiness and is key to our ability to fight and win our  
11 Nation's wars. To maintain readiness and shape the future  
12 of the Army, we must recruit resilient, diverse individuals  
13 of high character to fully man formations while achieving  
14 sustainable growth and maintaining high-quality standards.  
15 Furthermore, we must recruit in a competitive requirement  
16 where only about 29 percent of the 17- to 24-year-olds are  
17 even eligible to join the Army and only about eight percent  
18 have a propensity to serve in the military.

19           The Army must also continue to retain the most  
20 talented soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and  
21 commissioned officers with the experience and skills  
22 necessary to meet current and future needs. The Army  
23 remains committed to giving all soldiers who can meet the  
24 standards of the military occupational specialty the  
25 opportunity to serve. We have successfully assessed and

1 transferred more than a thousand women into  
2 previously-closed occupations of Infantry, Field Artillery,  
3 and Armor.

4 As the Army works to become more lethal, to enhance  
5 both capability and capacity, and to ensure critical  
6 support to soldiers and their families, our Department of  
7 the Army civilians are an integral partner and we must  
8 continue to size the civilian workforce to meet our current  
9 and future demands. The Army Talent Management Task Force  
10 is leading the Army's effort to ensure the Army acquires,  
11 develops, employs, and retains soldiers and civilians. The  
12 Integrated Pay and Personnel System Army, or IPPS-A, will  
13 modernize and transform Army human resource processes to  
14 change how the Army manages our people. We recently  
15 completed a successful test of the system with the  
16 Pennsylvania Army National Guard, and this year we will  
17 field IPPS-A across the Army National Guard formations.

18 Thank you for the 2019 NDAA, which provided us great  
19 flexibility. We're beginning to use those authorities  
20 granted to help determine what future talent-based systems  
21 look like. We're transforming business processes and  
22 developing innovations to ensure we provide the force that  
23 is optimized. To ensure we are organizationally ready for  
24 combat, we must sustain the personnel readiness of our  
25 soldiers. The Army's improving personnel readiness and

1 employability by strengthening soldiers, improving  
2 resiliency skills, and fostering a culture of trust. We  
3 believe these actions will enhance unit readiness and  
4 cohesion.

5       The Army remains fully committed to eliminating sexual  
6 assault, sexual harassment, and associated retaliatory  
7 behavior from its ranks. We recognize that regardless of  
8 the progress we've made, there's much more to be done.  
9 Reports of sexual assault and harassment will be thoroughly  
10 investigated, and soldiers who commit these crimes will be  
11 held appropriately accountable for their actions. Soldiers  
12 who are victims of sexual assault will be fully supported  
13 and provided recovery services and victim protection.

14       The Army has reduced the number of non-deployable  
15 personnel and improved the overall personnel readiness of  
16 the Army. We also continue to reduce the time required for  
17 soldiers to process through the Integrated Disability  
18 Evaluation System. In addition to taking care of soldiers  
19 and their families while they're in the Army, we are  
20 committed to ensuring the successful transition as they  
21 prepare for life after the service. The Army's Soldier for  
22 Life program conducts strategic outreach and shapes  
23 education, employment, and health policies, programs, and  
24 services to inspire citizens to serve and create an  
25 environment where soldiers transition to be productive

1 veterans of character, integrity, and service as they  
2 return to their communities.

3       Our Army is strong because of the courage and  
4 commitment of our soldiers, civilians, veterans, and family  
5 members who serve our Nation. People are not in the Army;  
6 people are the Army. These men and women who serve our  
7 Nation, both in uniform and out of uniform, are our most  
8 important asset. For the Army to be ready, our soldiers  
9 must be ready.

10       Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, members of  
11 the committee, I thank you for the opportunity and your  
12 generous and unwavering support of our outstanding  
13 soldiers, civilian professionals, and their families.

14       [The prepared statement of General Seamands follows:]

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1 Senator Tillis: Thank you, General Seamands.

2 Admiral Burke.

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1           STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL ROBERT P. BURKE, USN,  
2 DEPUTY CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS, N-1

3           Admiral Burke: Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member  
4 Gillibrand, and distinguished members of this subcommittee,  
5 thank you for the opportunity to be here today and update  
6 you on your Navy's personnel programs.

7           We continue to grow the Navy's manpower commensurate  
8 with the force structure for the Navy the Nation Needs. We  
9 are simultaneously working to restore full manning to our  
10 existing fleet. This year we will grow the Navy by 7500  
11 people and another 5100 next year. Fleet wholeness  
12 continues to improve, as evidenced by steady progress in  
13 improving fleet manning and closing gaps at sea. Even as  
14 we grow the Navy at an aggressive pace, we still have work  
15 to do, and our success is directly tied to our collective  
16 commitment to consistent and full funding.

17           Finding the right people is as important as making  
18 numbers. The war for talent is real, and competition is  
19 increasing. We continue to make our overall recruiting  
20 goals -- the highest in decades -- mostly due to our  
21 recruiting transformation efforts, innovative use of social  
22 media, and by shifting our "Forged by the Sea" advertising  
23 campaign predominantly to the digital markets. A  
24 combination of our Sailor 2025 programs, surgical use of  
25 retention bonuses aided by predictive analytics, and other



1 policy levers resulted in 2018 showing the largest enlisted  
2 retention improvements in a decade. This is critical, as  
3 it has allowed us to begin to establish the deep bench of  
4 experienced journeymen needed to develop that next  
5 generation of masters.

6 Despite the overall improvements in retention, we  
7 continue to face challenges in a few specific fields:  
8 nuclear, aviation, cyber, Navy special warfare, and  
9 advanced electronics. Our Sailor 2025 initiatives continue  
10 to expand and get high marks from our sailors. This  
11 program will continue to be a critical force multiplier  
12 going forward. The underlying transparency and the  
13 flexibility it provides directly and positively impacts our  
14 sailors' Stay Navy decision.

15 We greatly appreciated the increased DOPMA flexibility  
16 this committee championed in the Fiscal Year '19 National  
17 Defense Authorization Act. We are already putting each of  
18 the new authorities to work, and we look forward to  
19 reporting our successes to you in the near future. But as  
20 important as the programs themselves is the manner in which  
21 we deliver our personnel services. There's a saying: "You  
22 recruit a sailor, but you retain the family." And although  
23 we enjoy many excellent benefits because of the great work  
24 you do here, sailors and their families still live with  
25 less than they deserve in some cases. Sailors should be

1 able to count on the correct and reliable pay all the time.  
2 We ask them to move frequently, a tough thing for families  
3 to do. We need to make it as seamless as possible for  
4 them, take away the avoidable frustrations by making the  
5 process simple, reliable, and customer service-friendly.  
6 That's what it'll take to show that we truly care and that  
7 we value their service as well as what they bring to the  
8 fight.

9         Our Manpower Personnel Training and Education  
10 Transformation efforts get at this exact point. Our last  
11 several years of efforts were spent setting the foundation  
12 to get to the finish line, and in 2018 we began launching  
13 the first of many new capabilities into the hands of our  
14 sailors. This past September, we launched MyNavy Career  
15 Center, delivering enhanced 24/7 personnel, pay, and  
16 training customer service, just like a modern banking or  
17 insurance call center. That call center exceeded industry  
18 benchmarks for customer service its first week of  
19 operation, and it continues to do so today. MyNavy Portal  
20 is our new, online one-stop personnel shop, and it offers a  
21 multitude of self-service options including online  
22 knowledge tools and a rapidly-expanding set of HR  
23 transactions, freeing up time for sailors to focus on  
24 war-fighting missions and families.

25         In January, we began the move to MyNavy Portal Mobile,

1 piloting use of commercial cloud systems without use of  
2 their Common Access Card. By the end of this calendar  
3 year, our sailors will be doing most of their personnel  
4 business from their smart phones, and their pay issues will  
5 be largely a thing of the past. The admin associated with  
6 a permanent change of station move will be an afterthought  
7 so that families can concentrate on what matters.  
8 Challenges remain, and we still have a great deal of work  
9 to get to where we need to be if we are going to be truly  
10 competitive, but we are on a great path.

11 I thank you for your support of these efforts and for  
12 your unwavering commitment to the men and women of the  
13 United States Navy and their families, and I look forward  
14 to continuing our partnership and to your questions. Thank  
15 you.

16 [The prepared statement of Admiral Burke follows:]

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1 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Admiral Burke.

2 General Kelly.

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1           STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL BRIAN T. KELLY, USAF,  
2 DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

3           General Kelly: Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member  
4 Gillibrand, and distinguished members of this subcommittee,  
5 thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to  
6 talk about our airmen -- Active, Guard, Reserve, and  
7 civilian.

8           America's airmen -- your airmen -- remain "Always  
9 There" as part of the joint team providing global  
10 vigilance, reach, and power in the defense of the Nation.  
11 The Air Force's top priority is to build a lethal and ready  
12 Air Force capable of executing our National Defense  
13 Strategy's assigned missions. At its core, building a  
14 lethal and ready Air Force is about people, making our  
15 airmen are most important asset.

16           We appreciate the support that you provided in the  
17 Fiscal Year '19 National Defense Authorization Act for  
18 continued end-strength growth to 690,500 total force  
19 airmen. This growth is accelerating our readiness recovery  
20 and will provide lethal airmen to protect and defend our  
21 Nation.

22           This past year, we focused the resources you provided  
23 on our front-line pacing units, the 204 operational  
24 squadrons that are required in the opening days of a peer  
25 fight. Prioritizing the resources you provided has us on

1 track to have 80 percent of the pacing units fully ready by  
2 the end of Fiscal Year '20, approximately six years faster  
3 than we originally projected.

4 Readiness is foremost about having the right number of  
5 capable airmen. Despite an increasingly competitive market  
6 for talent, our Active Duty, Reserve, and Air National  
7 Guard are all on track to meet our overall Fiscal Year '19  
8 recruiting goals, totaling nearly 57,000 new airmen.

9 Given the increasing recruiting challenges, we also  
10 appreciate the Congress' support of special and incentive  
11 pays, which are a critical component, complemented with  
12 nonmonetary incentives to maintaining and improving  
13 retention. The Fiscal Year '19 President's budget included  
14 \$1.2 billion for special and incentive pays, allowing the  
15 Air Force to retain highly skilled airmen. As you are  
16 aware, our aviators are one of our most stressed career  
17 fields. The Air Force ended Fiscal Year '18 with a total  
18 force pilot shortage of nearly 2,000, with slightly more  
19 than half of that shortfall falling within our fighter  
20 inventory. We appreciate the Congress' support for  
21 increasing the pilot annual cap and monthly incentive pays,  
22 which we believe had a positive impact.

23 Besides monetary incentives, the Air Force is focused  
24 on improving the quality of life and quality of service.  
25 As one example, we added this year flexibility into our

1 officer assignment process by leveraging technology through  
2 our new Talent Marketplace assignment matching system. We  
3 believe the increased transparency and improved member  
4 input will be a positive retention influence. In our vital  
5 enlisted force, we continue to make the system more agile,  
6 more transparent and simple, to focus on and drive  
7 performance. Two recent examples include the changes we  
8 made to our weighted airman promotion system and  
9 adjustments to our high year of tenure limits.

10       The Air Force is also committed to transforming the  
11 way we develop, promote, and retain our officer corps. We  
12 thank the Congress for our increased DOPMA authorities we  
13 received this past year. We are in the process of  
14 utilizing both early promotion and constructive credit  
15 currently to fill inventory gaps and are working to  
16 incorporate several other new authorities that you provided  
17 as part of our overall talent management transformation.

18       Our Air Force civilian employees stationed across the  
19 globe share the same responsibility to our Nation as the  
20 men and women in uniform. Having a high-quality force and  
21 being able to recruit and compete for top civilian talent  
22 is also essential to readiness. With your help, we also  
23 increased support to airmen and families to improve  
24 resiliency and retention. We increased funding to expand  
25 child care for airmen on base to those needing expanded

1 care outside of normal duty hours and to provide offset  
2 fees to support over 4500 children who use off-base child  
3 care.

4 We are deeply committed to the prevention of  
5 interpersonal violence on all fronts. Sexual assault is a  
6 crime that negatively affects airmen and families, erodes  
7 unit cohesion, and violates the sacred trust we have to  
8 take care of airmen America's sons and daughters. The Air  
9 Force remains steadfast in innovating, evolving, and  
10 strengthening our sexual assault prevention and response  
11 efforts through evidence-based approaches. Recent findings  
12 at our service academies continue to show that despite  
13 substantial efforts, we must do more. While these findings  
14 are both disheartening and frustrating, they are also  
15 unacceptable, and we remain fully committed to eradicating  
16 this negative behavior. While the vast majority of cadets  
17 and airmen adhere to our expectations for ethical behavior,  
18 there is no place in our academy or our Air Force for those  
19 who do not.

20 We are also committed to achieving zero suicides, the  
21 leading cause of death among Active-Duty airmen. We  
22 support a culture, and our programs are moving us to a  
23 place, where leaders at all levels reinforce the notion  
24 that seeking help is a sign of strength and airmen need not  
25 go it alone.



1 Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and  
2 members of the subcommittee, thank you again for the  
3 opportunity to appear before you and represent our  
4 incredible airmen and their families. Your airmen stand  
5 ready and fully understand the responsibilities to the  
6 joint force and Nation. I'm honored to be here alongside  
7 my colleagues, and I thank you for your continued support  
8 and I look forward to your questions.

9 [The prepared statement of General Kelly follows:]

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1 Senator Tillis: Thank you, General Kelly.

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, distinguished members of the subcommittee,  
5 thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

6           Marines are the foundation of the corps. They are  
7 recruited, trained, educated, and retained to win our  
8 Nation's battles. They are smart, resilient, fit,  
9 disciplined, and able to overcome adversity. All marines  
10 are war-fighters; they are lethal, and they are ready. To  
11 ensure the continued health of the corps, the recruiting  
12 and retaining of high-quality women and men is my number  
13 one priority.

14          This year, the corps will once again meet our  
15 recruiting mission, while at the same time exceeding all  
16 quality goals. Over 99 percent of our recruits are in the  
17 top education tier. The corps is also on pace to meet our  
18 retention goals this year; however, this is a continuous  
19 challenge because of the strong civilian market. This is  
20 particularly true for cyber, intelligence, aviation, and  
21 many other critical high-tech occupations. To be good  
22 stewards of the money you provide us, we narrowly target  
23 our incentive pays and bonuses to these occupations. These  
24 bonuses are vital to our retention effort, and we  
25 appreciate your continued support for them.

1           The Marine Corps is an objective, standards-based  
2 organization. We want the best marines, female or male,  
3 and have refocused and refined our outreach to ensure we  
4 bring awareness of what it means to be a marine to a larger  
5 audience. This is paid dividends. Five years ago, the  
6 Marine Corps was 7.3 percent female. We are now  
7 8.6 percent. In Fiscal Year '18, female accessions were  
8 over 10 percent of the population, and we are on that same  
9 trajectory this year. Additionally, females are  
10 represented in all previously-restricted occupational  
11 fields. We need the best our Nation offers, and we are  
12 getting them.

13           Once we make a marine, our responsibility is to be  
14 there to help when life's challenges arise. Marines take  
15 care of their own, on and off the battlefield.  
16 Unfortunately, we have seen an increase in marine suicides  
17 last year. Suicide is a very complex issue that impacts  
18 our whole Nation. We know that relationship, financial,  
19 and legal issues are factors, but not always. We know that  
20 transitions or simply being on leave can be a factor, but  
21 not always. Suicide is a tragedy. It is a permanent  
22 solution to a temporary problem; permanent to the marine,  
23 permanent to friends, to the corps, and most importantly,  
24 permanent to the family who must endure that pain. Through  
25 various programs throughout the ranks, we urge all marines

1 to reach out for help when they need it. Marines need to  
2 know we are there for them.

3 Sexual assault prevention and response is another area  
4 to which we are 100 percent committed. Sexual assault is a  
5 crime and violates everything the Marine Corps stands for.  
6 We saw a rise in reports last year. The vast majority are  
7 unrestricted reports, which is encouraging because we  
8 believe marines feel empowered to report, have faith in  
9 their leadership, and are confident we will hold the  
10 offenders accountable.

11 Lastly, I want to ask for your support for Camp  
12 Lejeune, Marine Corps Air Station New River, and Marine  
13 Corps Air Station Cherry Point, all of which were severely  
14 damaged by Hurricane Florence several months ago. We still  
15 have almost 500 buildings that are severely damaged and  
16 cannot be occupied. The cost to repair these facilities is  
17 over \$3.5 billion. We cannot fix this urgent problem  
18 without your help.

19 I am proud to represent the men and women of  
20 character -- the few, the proud -- who have taken up the  
21 challenge of being a marine. By keeping unwavering focus  
22 on our marines and their spouses/families who support them,  
23 we can continue to keep faith with the honor, courage, and  
24 commitment they have unselfishly given. I look forward to  
25 answering your questions. Thank you.

1 [The prepared joint statement of General Rocco and  
2 Sergeant Green follows:]

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1           Senator Tillis: Thank you, General Rocco. I am going  
2 to reorder my time to the end and recognize Senator  
3 McSally, followed by Senator Gillibrand.

4           Senator McSally: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really  
5 appreciate it.

6           Thanks, gentlemen, for your service and your  
7 testimony. Many topics we could talk about, but one that  
8 we had talked about a few weeks ago in a full committee  
9 hearing related to military family housing and the  
10 privatized housing, and some pretty awful and unacceptable  
11 conditions that we heard testimony by a number of families.  
12 I can't imagine, as a former commander myself, having  
13 anybody in my unit going to work every day or being  
14 deployed and having their families back home dealing with  
15 some of the conditions that we saw there that are harmful  
16 to the health of the family and their children,  
17 unresponsive private contractors, and it seems like some  
18 disconnects with who's responsible in the chain of command.

19           Since that hearing, unfortunately -- it shouldn't have  
20 taken a hearing to be talking about this -- some staff from  
21 this committee actually made some unannounced trips to Fort  
22 Bragg and Norfolk and saw some additional cases there of  
23 very bad circumstances for these families that are just  
24 unacceptable.

25           So what are you doing within your authorities to

1 address these issues and immediately get families that are  
2 in harm's way in their own homes right now into better  
3 circumstances, and what other authorities -- what do we  
4 need to change here in order to fix this immediately?  
5 Because this is just absolutely wrong.

6 I'll start with you, General Seamands and Admiral  
7 Burke, since the two places that were visited were Army and  
8 Navy. But it really goes across all the services.

9 General Seamands: Senator, thanks for your question.  
10 I'll tell you, our Nation expects our soldiers to protect  
11 the Nation. Our soldiers expect our Army to protect their  
12 families.

13 Senator McSally: Right.

14 General Seamands: And quite frankly, we fell down on  
15 the job. There's no excuse for it. It's clearly  
16 unacceptable.

17 What the Army has done, Senator, is within the first  
18 two weeks -- within 15 days, every commander has to have a  
19 town hall advertised -- in fact, the one at Fort Myers is  
20 happening tonight; my wife will be there -- to make sure  
21 they understand what's going on and we communicate with the  
22 families. Within 30 days, a commander from every  
23 organization will inspect I think it's about 117,000 sets  
24 of quarters, and barracks, 7,000 barracks buildings, across  
25 our Army to put eyes on where the soldiers are living to



1 make sure that they're adequate, and if they're not  
2 adequate, to raise the flag.

3 We're also making sure that the families and soldiers  
4 who raise issues understand there won't be any retaliation  
5 from the contractor or anybody else, that they have the  
6 full support of the Army.

7 Senator McSally: All right. Thanks.

8 Admiral Burke?

9 Admiral Burke: Senator, we have a very similar system  
10 lined up. Again, we view this as an urgent operational  
11 issue affecting not only the trust and confidence of our  
12 sailors and their families, but their health, safety, and  
13 well-being, just as you've said. And they have to be  
14 confident -- our sailors and their families have to be  
15 confident that when they take an issue to us, it's going to  
16 be -- to their leadership -- that it's going to be handled.

17 And this really is a deck-plate leadership issue, and,  
18 you know, the fact that this is a relationship between a  
19 government agency and a private company should not  
20 interfere with that responsibility, and we're stressing  
21 that particular point with our leadership.

22 So Commander, Navy Installations Command is the  
23 organization that runs that, and our Navy, with the support  
24 of CNO staff that I'm a part of, is already reacting and on  
25 the job, and we are engaged in actions that are going to

1 increase the oversight of those partners, introduce  
2 improved quality assurance of housing operations, follow up  
3 on issues, add feedback mechanisms after trouble calls are  
4 closed out, focus on the improved customer service, and  
5 begin a robust series of engagements. So e-mail, social  
6 media outreach, town halls, and home visits by invitation.  
7 We're doing a 100 percent contact to the offer of a home  
8 visit, which sailors can decline, for Public Private  
9 Venture homes as well as all government homes. So a  
10 hundred-percent offer that the sailors can decline.

11 We'll evaluate, then, and modify as needed the Navy's  
12 business agreements with the privatized housing partners so  
13 that the agreements are properly structured to incentivize  
14 the partners' responsiveness, quality control, and the  
15 management oversight and customer service to our sailors  
16 and their families, and then make permanent our command's  
17 involvement in their feeling of responsibility for dealing  
18 with those situations from this point forward. So that  
19 hundred-percent contact is in place. Just like General  
20 Seamands, I was already contacted by my local installation  
21 commander and the partner company, and the town halls are  
22 going on and those inspections are out in force.

23 Senator McSally: Thanks. I'm out of time, so if we  
24 could grab for the record for the rest of you guys, but the  
25 point is it shouldn't have taken a media

1 story -- right? -- to put all these things in place. And  
2 something clearly needs to change so that when it's not in  
3 the media, these are sustained care and support of our  
4 family members, for our service members, our men and women.  
5 I mean, this is just absolutely unacceptable, the situation  
6 that many of them have been put in, and the system that we  
7 have is not working. So it was broken for us to get to  
8 this point.

9       General Rocco: Senator, and I know we're out of time,  
10 but I'd just like to add for the Marine Corps, the  
11 Commandant, we recognize this, and you're absolutely right;  
12 it's unacceptable. There was a disconnect. And what he's  
13 done, and he puts out very few white letters, but  
14 it's -- to the command -- and it's commanders' business.  
15 And we've now since made it -- we re-attacked it, and it is  
16 commanders' business. And we're going to fix it.

17       General Kelly: Yeah, just, if I could, Chairman,  
18 really quick, because this is such an important issue. You  
19 know, this is absolutely commander's business, and our  
20 Chief and Secretary put that out and made sure, and we will  
21 be finished by this Friday with a hundred-percent  
22 inspection of every commander across the Air Force, every  
23 housing unit, eyes on -- personally, eyes on at the  
24 commander level. There is no gap between whose  
25 responsibility is up. Commanders have responsibility for

1 making sure our airmen and their families are taken care  
2 of.

3 I would just add that one other thing I think is  
4 potentially a place to go forward is, I know our Chief and  
5 Secretary support a discussion on getting a tenant bill of  
6 rights that can help us in discussion with those  
7 contractors and privatized housing as we move forward.

8 Senator McSally: Great. Thanks.

9 Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

10 Senator Tillis: Senator Gillibrand.

11 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, again.

12 And thank you for your testimony, thank you for your  
13 dedication to protecting the men and women who are serving  
14 and for your dedication to these personnel matters that  
15 really we care so deeply about.

16 I first want to ask about this issue of climate.  
17 Despite intense support from military spousal hiring  
18 programs over the last few years, the rates of unemployment  
19 or underemployment for spouses seeking to join the  
20 workforce remain too high. Part of the challenge is the  
21 frequent PCS moves required by military service. For many  
22 spouses, civilian employment by the federal government can  
23 be a solution, and Congress has worked to provide DOD with  
24 special hiring authorities to ease their employment  
25 process.

1           How are you working to bring more military spouses  
2 into civilian workforce, and when a spouse learns that  
3 they'll be moving duty stations, how can they go about  
4 locking in a federal job as their next post before arriving  
5 in person?

6           General Seamands: Senator, thanks for your support of  
7 our military spouses. A couple things the Army has done  
8 recently is to take those people who do child and youth  
9 services, child cares, those people who work in the  
10 civilian personnel offices and soon to be the DODEA, the  
11 Department of Defense Education Agency, and if you are,  
12 say, for example, at Fort Riley Kansas and your soldier  
13 moves to Fort Hood, you are streamlined automatically into  
14 a new installation into a job like you had been; you're  
15 already cleared, all your credentials continue to transfer,  
16 to provide the opportunity for those spouses to have  
17 limited time without a job, just the transition, not going  
18 through the application or recertification process, and we  
19 think that's been a very positive step. We think it's the  
20 first step in many steps that can be taken to provide  
21 enhanced employment opportunities for spouses.

22           Senator Gillibrand: Go ahead. If somebody else wants  
23 to add, you can.

24           Admiral Burke: Ma'am, we have at our Fleet and Family  
25 Support Centers and our Family Employment Readiness Program

1 assists military spouses in obtaining employment and  
2 maintaining careers as we ask our service members to move.  
3 So we have a number of programs helping them gain portable  
4 careers for military families on the move -- starting  
5 businesses, job search strategies, networking.

6 We're also implementing authorities that you gave us  
7 in FY18 NDAA to offset certification costs. Those will be  
8 implemented by June as part of our permanent change of  
9 station move app. It'll be integral as part of the  
10 permanent change of station move process. But the real  
11 challenge is that many professional spouses have  
12 certifications that don't translate state to state. And  
13 that's an area where you could help us with the reciprocity  
14 or something that temporarily translates over so they could  
15 start working and then regain their certification.

16 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

17 And for General Kelly and General Rocco, would you  
18 submit your answer for the record? Because I just want to  
19 do a second topic before my time expires.

20 In June of 2017, Politico Magazine published a story  
21 outlining Russian attempts to specifically influence  
22 service members on social media and sow distrust in our  
23 political system. Then earlier this month, it was reported  
24 that researchers at NATO Strategic Communications Centre of  
25 Excellence used Facebook and Instagram content to instill

1 undesirable behavior in troops during an exercise.

2       What training are you providing to service members to  
3 help them recognize foreign influence efforts targeting  
4 them on social media? Whoever has something, go ahead.

5       General Kelly: Senator Gillibrand, the Air Force has  
6 two programs specifically designed in this area. The first  
7 is that basic training for our incoming airmen. They give  
8 up their phones and they go through social media training  
9 including discussions of training on foreign influence and  
10 social hygiene, if you will, social media hygiene. And  
11 that happens near the end of that basic training, and  
12 that's at the point when they get their telephones back.

13       For the rest of the airmen who are in, there's an  
14 annual training event that happens each year throughout the  
15 entire force where you go through and do cybersecurity  
16 awareness, and these topics are covered.

17       General Rocco: Senator Gillibrand, so the Marine  
18 Corps' Social Media Accountability Response Team, that's  
19 the team that observes social media to ensure that the  
20 members are -- what they're posting and what is being  
21 delivered to their social media posts, we do annual cyber  
22 training and annual social media training, and we also have  
23 the PAC order, which is a Prohibited Activities and  
24 Consolidation order that has taken all of those things that  
25 were disparate in different orders in the Marine Corps and

1 has put it into one order, so now members know exactly what  
2 is expected of them.

3 Senator Gillibrand: And related, with my last 20  
4 seconds, we also have had hearings on this specifically  
5 about sexual harassment and demeaning personnel members.  
6 Can anyone give a report on how that's going in terms of  
7 prevention?

8 Admiral Burke: In terms of online in particular?

9 Senator Gillibrand: Correct, yes, specifically.

10 General Kelly: So that training for our basic  
11 military training discussion on cyber discusses cyber  
12 bullying, cyber attempts to coerce, and all those kind of  
13 things are a part of that. How that's completely  
14 translating into lower rates is difficult for us, but we'll  
15 continue to collect that data, but that's definitely part  
16 of the training program that we put in place.

17 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Senator Tillis: Senator Duckworth.

20 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 I want to thank the panelists for attending today's  
22 hearing and I look forward to your candor and perspective  
23 on personnel policies. You know, we want to assist you in  
24 whatever way possible, whether it be resources or  
25 authorities.



1 My first question, gentlemen, is, in many cases where  
2 a service member reports that they have been the victim of  
3 sexual assault, service members can face severe punishment  
4 or a less than honorable discharge if they are found to  
5 have engaged in some form of collateral misconduct, like  
6 underage drinking or fraternization. Punishing victims for  
7 collateral misconduct has many negative consequences and it  
8 represents a significant barrier to reporting of sexual  
9 assault in the military.

10 Do you agree that collateral misconduct and the threat  
11 of punishment for it represents a barrier to sexual assault  
12 reporting, and how can such barriers be lowered or  
13 mitigated, and would immunity or deferral of action against  
14 punishment for collateral misconduct potentially help with  
15 increasing the instances of reporting of sexual harassment?

16 General Rocco: Senator, that's an important question.  
17 And from the Marine Corps perspective, one, commanders do  
18 have the ability to defer some of the charges. But to the  
19 larger point, I think that's something we can get back to  
20 you, as far as from the legal standpoint, on what  
21 exactly -- the specifics of what can be deferred and what  
22 cannot be deferred. But I fully agree. We're agreeable to  
23 anything that will increase reporting and expose some of  
24 those issues.

25 Admiral Burke: Senator, ma'am, again, I think it's

1 case dependent, again. But, in general, reporting tends to  
2 be independent of what eventually ends up being a method of  
3 accountability and the specific charges an individual is  
4 going to be held accountable against and those specific  
5 charges that end up being the ones that a particular  
6 commander -- each commander is going to be advised by a  
7 trial counsel, a prosecutor, if you will, in civilian  
8 terms, that's a specialist in general and in sexual assault  
9 prosecution. We're going to use every tool at our disposal  
10 to hold that individual accountable so that they don't  
11 walk. That's what every commander is going to do.

12       So if there is a sexual assault-related article that  
13 they can be held accountable towards with a reasonable  
14 expectation of success, they're going to use that charge.  
15 But reporting and then prosecution are two different  
16 things, I think, in general. So the reporting I see as  
17 unrelated. But I may be misunderstanding your question.

18       Senator Duckworth: I think you are. What I'm asking  
19 is, for the average troop, sailor who is the victim of  
20 sexual harassment or sexual assault, one of the things that  
21 can happen is that the perpetrator is saying, "Well, yeah,  
22 but you were drinking underage. If you report this, you're  
23 going to be prosecuted for underage drinking," or "You're  
24 going to be prosecuted for fraternization." And that  
25 threat itself, the validity of that threat will prevent the

1 victim from reporting. And is there any move towards some  
2 sort of ability to lower those barriers, such as immunity  
3 or deferral of action, so that the average troop knows even  
4 if you are underage drinking, you need to come forward and  
5 report, because we're not going to pursue that and you're  
6 not going to get an other than honorable discharge because  
7 you reported this, not because of the sexual assault  
8 reporting, but because of the underage drinking?

9       General Kelly: Senator, I'll add in to that  
10 discussion, we do think there's a barrier there. We do  
11 think that inhibits reporting. So, as General Rocco said,  
12 any chance there is to increase the reporting, we're for.

13       So at our Air Force Academy, for instance, there's  
14 already training ongoing with our commanders and folks out  
15 there that talk about deferral of punishment and sort of  
16 immunity, if you will, maybe not in those words used, but  
17 to allow folks to come forward and report knowing that  
18 there wouldn't be a -- the focus would not be on the acts  
19 that occurred by the member, but on the actual perpetrator.

20       We're trying to bring that into the rest of the force  
21 as well, and I do think there is a case-by-case discussion  
22 for those kind of things, but we recognize that, and that's  
23 ongoing to make sure that we can increase reporting.

24       Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

25       I've not very much time left, but if you could answer

1 for the record this question. The greatest fighting force  
2 on the planet needs the most talented people. From  
3 cybersecurity to medical services, reports indicate that  
4 the services are facing an increasingly smaller talent pool  
5 and must compete with a robust job market. This difficulty  
6 coincides with increasing demands placed on the U.S.  
7 military. And last year, for example, Secretary Mattis  
8 established the Close Combat Lethality Task Force, which  
9 identified the need to recruit and retain service members  
10 specifically for close combat infantry.

11 How are you adapting your recruiting efforts within  
12 this environment to meet the personnel objectives of  
13 Department initiatives such as the Close Combat Lethality  
14 Task Force, and are there additional authorities or  
15 resources that you might require in order to become more  
16 competitive within today's job market? And if you could do  
17 that for the record, I'd really appreciate it. Thank you,  
18 gentlemen.

19 I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

20 Senator Tillis: Senator Warren.

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

22 Thank you all for being here today.

23 So I want to spend a few minutes today talking about  
24 an essential program that's run by the Department of  
25 Defense that is a critical part of our military readiness.

1 Not many people know this: The Department of Defense runs  
2 the largest employer-sponsored child care program in the  
3 Nation. In fact, the program employs 23,000 workers who  
4 care for more than 200,000 children. The military child  
5 care program is open to every military family, regardless  
6 of rank. It has high standards. It's designed to be  
7 affordable for every military family.

8 So let me just ask, whoever would like to do this,  
9 maybe Admiral Burke, why is access to safe, affordable,  
10 high-quality child care a crucial part of military  
11 readiness?

12 Admiral Burke: It's absolutely a part of military  
13 readiness, ma'am, because -- and it's not a gender specific  
14 issue. It's a married couple issue. It's a family issue.

15 Senator Warren: Family issue.

16 Admiral Burke: If you have children and you're  
17 deploying, and we have a preponderance of married folks in  
18 our service today. It's not a single, you know, service  
19 members service anymore, and we have a preponderance of  
20 service to service members.

21 Senator Warren: Although I take it you also have  
22 single parents in the military as well.

23 Admiral Burke: We do. We do have a cross-section of  
24 those as well. Yes, ma'am. But child care and the ability  
25 to deploy is an important factor, and even when you're not

1 deployed, ability to work the long hours that we expect  
2 even when you're in a non-deployed status requires child  
3 care.

4       And the fact of the matter is that child care capacity  
5 is a nationwide challenge. And depending on where you're  
6 based, and this is not unique to the Navy, but the Navy  
7 happens to be in areas that are particularly  
8 childcare-capacity challenged -- we have our limitations of  
9 the amount of capacity that we have to the military through  
10 the Navy child care programs, but those commercial child  
11 care capacities happen to be equally or even more  
12 challenged in the areas where our naval stations are.

13       So it's particularly acute for the Navy. In fact,  
14 Navy's one of the main consumers of all of the Department  
15 of Defense's child care capacity because of that reason.

16       Senator Warren: So thank you. That's really  
17 important.

18       There are a couple of other questions I want to ask by  
19 follow-up, but I want anyone to weigh in who wants to.

20       An impressive 95 percent of the military's child care  
21 centers are nationally accredited -- compare that, by the  
22 way, to just 11 percent of nonmilitary centers across the  
23 U.S. So I want to ask the question, why does the military  
24 put so much emphasis on making sure that child care  
25 accessed by military families is of very high quality?

1           General Kelly:  Senator, I'll start real quick for the  
2 team here.

3           Senator Warren:  Sure.

4           General Kelly:  Just take these statistics:  
5 Sixty-nine percent of our officers are married.  Fifty-one  
6 percent of our enlisted are married.  We have countless  
7 other single airmen who have families.  380,000 family  
8 members that we have to take care of.  We're retaining  
9 families.  Readiness for the Air Force is about making sure  
10 the entire family is comfortable and safe so that airmen  
11 can focus on their job and focus on what they do.

12           This last year, we put \$40 million more into our child  
13 care programs:  119 new providers, 180 new family day care  
14 providers certified to do those things, bought new cameras  
15 for those places.  It is an investment for us in readiness  
16 and capability, and we're going to continue to invest in  
17 that area.

18           Senator Warren:  Quality is a key part of that,  
19 keeping that quality up.  Anybody else want to add on the  
20 quality part?

21           General Rocco:  Absolutely, Senator.

22           Senator Warren:  Please, General Rocco.

23           General Rocco:  And they mentioned it, but I'll just  
24 reiterate it:  It's a family issue.  When the family is  
25 happy and secure, they're much more apt to work and

1 readiness is impacted in a positive way.

2           And DOD child care -- and you mentioned the  
3 numbers -- DOD child care, it's very helpful for the family  
4 members to know that they've got quality, affordable child  
5 care on base where their children are protected and secure.  
6 And at the end of the day, the more we can do to benefit  
7 the families, to make them more secure -- we expect a lot  
8 of our service members; this is the least we can do for  
9 their family members.

10           Senator Warren: Great. And I have one more thing I  
11 want to cover with the chair's permission, and that is,  
12 when a military parent puts their child in the military's  
13 child care program, they pay only a fraction of the actual  
14 cost based on income, and the DOD foots the remainder of  
15 the bill.

16           Why is it so important for the Department that the  
17 child care made available to military families is  
18 affordable?

19           General Kelly: So Senator --

20           Senator Warren: Go ahead, General Kelly.

21           General Kelly: Again, it's about taking care of those  
22 folks and making sure they have access. Given what we ask  
23 of the families and given what we provide in compensation,  
24 it's important for us to be able to offset that. In  
25 addition, even when we have 4500 airmen who have children



1 who don't have capacity on base, we provide offset costs to  
2 them so they can afford their off-base child care. It's  
3 just so essential to readiness and so essential to the  
4 quality of what we do to get out of our families and for  
5 attention we have to do that.

6       Senator Warren: Good. I just want to say I think  
7 it's great that the child of in the military family has  
8 access to high-quality care at a price that they can  
9 afford, and I'm glad to hear the enthusiasm with which you  
10 all discuss this and the commitment that you've made to  
11 this. I believe every child in America should have that  
12 same kind of opportunity. Last week, I introduced a  
13 universal child care and early learning program so that  
14 every child could get access to a program like that, and  
15 it's modeled off the program that you have built for the  
16 children of military families.

17       I think your points about readiness are spot on  
18 exactly right, but they are the kind of thing that every  
19 family feels. Anybody trying to hold down a job to finish  
20 an education, to take on a tougher work for a promotion,  
21 they all worry about their children. And they all need  
22 access to the kind of care that you're making sure our  
23 military families have. So thank you for all you're doing.  
24 I hope we can use you as a model and make that available to  
25 all of our kids. Thank you.

1 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Senator Warren.

3 I went to the end to allow some of the other members  
4 to go.

5 Senator Warren: I appreciate it.

6 Senator Tillis: So this is my opportunity to ask a  
7 couple of questions.

8 First, I'm glad to hear about the progress on child  
9 care. I can't wait until the homes that some of those kids  
10 come back to also get a good progress report. So I'll take  
11 another jab in terms of the military housing issue that  
12 we've got to deal with.

13 General Seamands, you know, we've had some discussions  
14 about the end strength numbers. I know you didn't hit your  
15 recruiting numbers. I had a discussion last week with  
16 Secretary Esper. Give me an idea, first off, I know, I  
17 think for the benefit of the group, I know some of the  
18 things that you're doing to confront the challenge and  
19 build the pipeline, but also give the committee some  
20 insights into targets for next year and why you think  
21 they're attainable.

22 General Seamands: Senator, thanks for the question.  
23 As you say, we did miss the target last year. We are  
24 working very hard this year to get after it. We've done a  
25 number of things.

1           One, we've increased the number of recruiters to the  
2           tune of about 900 additional recruiters out there across  
3           our Nation. We have made the pivot to social media,  
4           getting after where the young men and women are instead of  
5           where they used to be. We've done a similar thing for the  
6           brick and mortar. We've put about \$45 million into  
7           something that benefits all the services as we move  
8           recruiting stations out of places where they used to be to  
9           where the young men and women are today. We've taken the  
10          opportunity to give officers the chance to have a second  
11          command, like a line command, and then a second command  
12          within the Training and Doctrine Command, so they bring  
13          that experience from the first command into that  
14          organization.

15          We also have a focus on 22 different cities where the  
16          Secretary of the Army and the Army leadership will go out  
17          to where the recruiters are and have an event and focus on  
18          those areas -- in some cases, places we had not used that  
19          effectively before -- to show the Army brand and encourage  
20          young men and women to come in.

21          It's a tough environment across the board for all the  
22          services. We think this year we'll hit between 68 and 69  
23          thousand recruits, which is about what we hit last year,  
24          for our accessions. But this year we had fewer losses,  
25          based on the number of people that came in a couple years

1 ago, and so we think the mission should be about 68, 69.  
2 We think that the steady, supportable, quality growth in  
3 the Army is about 2,000 per year, and we think we can  
4 accomplish that in the out-years, moving toward 5,000 as an  
5 eventual end strength for the Army.

6 So a tough environment. Our recruiters are doing  
7 amazing things out there. We give Recruiting Command a  
8 mission, but, Senator, it's not Recruiting Command's  
9 mission; it's actually the Army mission. So as I fly on  
10 commercial aircraft, I talk to the people next to me. When  
11 I'm on the Metro, I talk to people. And I think everybody  
12 in the Army, as well as veterans and retirees, I challenge  
13 them to have the same commitment to bringing future  
14 soldiers into our force.

15 Senator Tillis: Our TAG down in North Carolina was on  
16 the Senate steps today. I saw him trying to build a  
17 pipeline of seventh graders from North Carolina, so I can  
18 attest to you all trying to do the two hats.

19 [Laughter.]

20 Senator Tillis: General Rocco, it's very seldom in  
21 opening statements that you talk about specific geographies  
22 as a priority. And you mentioned Camp Lejeune and the 500  
23 or so houses, or buildings, I should say, that are damaged  
24 or uninhabitable. Can you just explain again why, you  
25 know, this isn't -- I happen to be from North Carolina.

1 Why not talk about the need for the supplemental funding  
2 and getting the resources in there, why this is critical to  
3 the general readiness of our folks down in North Carolina?

4 General Rocco: Thank you, Senator Tillis.

5 Camp Lejeune is our major base on the East Coast. The  
6 force generation out of -- which is the home of the II  
7 Marine Expeditionary Force. So when you talk about  
8 readiness and force generation from the Marine Corps  
9 perspective, that's well over a third of the generating  
10 force generation capability inside the Marine Corps.

11 Those 500 buildings that I mentioned, it's not PPV,  
12 it's not housing. That's a separate issue. That is all  
13 the buildings and facilities that the marines use to train  
14 with, to train from, to fly aircraft out of, to fix  
15 aircraft.

16 I spoke to a doctor today who just recently -- an  
17 ophthalmologist who just recently moved her clinic back  
18 into spaces. So Florence was many months ago, and they've  
19 been either not operating or operating out of, basically,  
20 trailers, supporting marines. And you know that they're  
21 not getting the support that they would get. And it's  
22 taken that long to just move a clinic, a medical clinic,  
23 into spaces that are habitable.

24 Senator Tillis: So it's fair to say that regardless  
25 of whether you're in Camp Lejeune or across the world, if

1 you're a marine, you consider this a priority for the whole  
2 corps, not just for a place that got hit by a hurricane.

3       General Rocco: Absolutely. It is not  
4 localized -- it's North Carolina, but it's not localized.  
5 Those marines deploy worldwide. And that's why it's a  
6 worldwide issue.

7       Senator Tillis: Thank you. The other advantage to  
8 going last, it seems like I'm being courteous, but I can go  
9 over and not have to apologize to anybody.

10       [Laughter.]

11       Senator Tillis: So, General Kelly and Admiral Burke,  
12 I want to talk a little bit about some of the personnel  
13 changes and offer of the expanded spot -- or the spot  
14 promotion authorities, some of the things that we put in  
15 the last NDA. And either tell me about how it's already  
16 working or how you expect it to work and produce better  
17 results. We'll start with General Kelly.

18       General Kelly: Thank you, Senator, for the  
19 opportunity, and again, thanks for the support of those  
20 DOPMA authorities that you provided to us.

21       You know, often we create new missions or we create  
22 new goals inside the Department; for instance, cyber was an  
23 emerging mission and we created cyber mission teams at our  
24 combatant commands. When we did that, there was an instant  
25 desire to have experienced and usually mid-grade officers

1 provide in those areas. The DOPMA authorities that you  
2 provided helps us get after that. Because normally they  
3 would say, "How can you get me 300 more 0-4s to fit in that  
4 job?" The answer is, "Wait twelve years" normally, "and  
5 I'll give you 300 more 0-4s."

6 Now with the authorities that you've provided to us,  
7 what we're moving out and doing is we're using constructive  
8 credit to bring folks over. We brought several of our  
9 enlisted members over who already had advanced cyber  
10 degrees over, able to credit them at a higher rank, bring  
11 them into and fill some of those gaps and holes. The same  
12 thing with the temporary promotion authorities or early  
13 promotion authorities, that we're able to reach in, find  
14 holes in places within the inventory where we have  
15 shortages and apply those DOPMA authorities going forward.  
16 And we see the same things with some of the other ones that  
17 we haven't yet integrated but will be doing shortly in the  
18 future.

19 Senator Tillis: And we're looking for feedback to the  
20 committee on things that we've learned that we need to  
21 adjust or expand, so please keep the suggestions coming.

22 Admiral Burke.

23 Admiral Burke: Sir, we've used the merit promotion  
24 reorder on our 0-6 and 0-5 boards, which met in January and  
25 earlier this month in February. We'll use it in our 0-4

1 boards in April. Widely popular, the idea of merit and  
2 getting promoted and paid a little bit earlier based on  
3 what you've done lately rather than your lineal number from  
4 way back when.

5       The constructive credit option and lateral hiring,  
6 we've put that into place. Have not used it yet, but for  
7 cyber warfare engineers, engineering duty, and a couple of  
8 restricted line programs, the "up and stay," as we're  
9 referring to it colloquially, but the ability to take a  
10 selected oath reason and not have to repeatedly go through  
11 a continuation, we used that for a program that our pilots  
12 repeatedly said, "Hey, if you could let us fly forever, we  
13 wouldn't leave the Navy." So we're calling them on it, and  
14 we'll see if they really will.

15       But we selected 25 aviators that had intended to  
16 separate, and in November, we made the selections. They're  
17 now flight instructors. That's 25 people that were leaving  
18 the Navy. That's 25 fewer first-term naval aviators that I  
19 don't have to pull from the fleet now to go make flight  
20 instructors that we used that authority for. So helping  
21 out with my aviation retention problem directly because of  
22 that one.

23       The promotion deferral, just timing-wise I won't be  
24 able to use that until next year, but we're poised to use  
25 that for next year. But we're really grateful. We'd like



1 to get some run time with these and report back to you.  
2 But I expect to have some really good news for you on all  
3 of them.

4       Senator Tillis: Very good. Thank you all. We're  
5 going to transition to the next panel, and I'm just going  
6 to defer the question, but I will tell you, I don't know if  
7 you all intend to be around for the next panel, but we were  
8 looking at the opt-in rate for the Blended Retirement  
9 System that we implemented, and there's a vast disparity,  
10 particularly between the Marines, which is close to  
11 three-quarter opt-in, and the Army, which is close to  
12 one-quarter opt-in. And Navy and Air Force it's somewhere  
13 in between.

14       But really want to, with the -- I'm giving the next  
15 panel an opportunity to think through and answer that  
16 question because I think we had some folks with mixed  
17 emotions about whether we should even do it. But I'm kind  
18 of interested now in the disparity and just want to let you  
19 all know that's something that I want to look at because if  
20 we need to make adjustments or look at the root causes for  
21 why we have a disparity in opt-in rates, and that's  
22 something I want to work on this year.

23       Thank you all for being here, your continued service,  
24 and also thank you for the visits and working with our  
25 staff.

1           We're going to move to the second panel. We'll give a  
2 couple of minutes to allow the staff to transition.

3           Gentlemen, thank you all for being here, and thank you  
4 for your past, current, and what I'm sure will be future  
5 service.

6           I want to introduce the second panel: Sergeant Major  
7 of the Army, Daniel Dailey; Master Chief Petty Officer of  
8 the Navy, Russell Smith; Master Chief Sergeant of the Air  
9 Force, Kaleth Wright; and Sergeant Major of the Marine  
10 Corps, Ronald Green. Thank you all for being here. I am  
11 not going to make any opening statement, just transition  
12 right to yours.

13           Sergeant Major Dailey.

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1           STATEMENT OF SERGEANT MAJOR DANIEL A. DAILEY, USA,  
2 SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY

3           Sergeant Dailey: Thank you, Senator.

4           Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand,  
5 distinguished members of this subcommittee, thank you for  
6 the opportunity to speak on behalf of nearly 2.3 million  
7 soldiers, families, and Army civilians who make our  
8 All-Volunteer Force the world's premier organization. I'm  
9 truly honored to provide an update on the quality of life  
10 of your U.S. Army.

11           The Army is grateful for Congress' support in  
12 advancing Army readiness, modernization, and reform. The  
13 Army has more units ready than any time in recent history.  
14 Army readiness is our number one priority. I am prepared  
15 to discuss a number of efforts we have brought to bear as  
16 we improve readiness across the total Army. This includes,  
17 but is not limited to, extending Infantry One Station Unit  
18 Training, increasing Combined Training Center rotations,  
19 and implementing the Army Combat Fitness Test.

20           Our ready Army requires the recruitment and retention  
21 of quality personnel, and we are currently on track to  
22 achieve our FY19 recruiting goals for all three components.  
23 In addition, our Army produced historic retention rates of  
24 over 90 percent of the eligible population of the Army last  
25 year, and we're on track to do the same for this year. The

1 Army continues to build the best possible All-Volunteer  
2 Force by selecting the best qualified soldiers capable of  
3 meeting the rigors of Army standards. This commitment to  
4 standards is clearly demonstrated by the more than 1,000  
5 women serving in our combat arms formations today.

6 The Army strives to provide an environment of dignity  
7 and respect for all service members and is fully committed  
8 to eliminating sexual assault. We recognize that  
9 regardless of the progress that we have made, more work  
10 still needs to be done. These acts are unacceptable and we  
11 will continue to engage leaders at all levels to inspire a  
12 culture of commitment to Army values.

13 To better prepare our soldiers to meet the rigors and  
14 demands of a complex and unpredictable world, we have taken  
15 a comprehensive approach to health, nutrition, and fitness  
16 through programs such as the Holistic Health and Fitness  
17 System. Through these initiatives, we will be able to  
18 provide soldiers the opportunity to increase their personal  
19 readiness and live healthier lives.

20 Our Soldier for Life initiatives are a critical aspect  
21 of Army readiness. This is evident in the tremendous  
22 improvements to our transition assistance program, and  
23 through our combined efforts, we have made significant  
24 investments in professional military education, academic  
25 equivalency, the career skills program, individual skills

1 initiatives, and partnerships with industry and academic.  
2 As a result, we reduced unemployment compensation, which  
3 reached \$515 million at its height in 2011, to less than  
4 \$100 million today. Through our commitment and efforts, I  
5 believe we will continue to see a reduction of this over  
6 time. These efforts have not just saved money, they've  
7 built readiness within the Army and strength in our Soldier  
8 for Life programs.

9 The Army has made significant efforts to improve  
10 quality of life based on feedback from the force. These  
11 updates intend to help build financial readiness, unburden  
12 the PCS process, create efficiency in child care services,  
13 and enhance other critical support services. These changes  
14 reaffirm our commitment to providing the best possible  
15 support to our people.

16 Child care, in particular, is a significant issue, as  
17 it is our single largest investment within family programs.  
18 The Army is actively working to reduce civilian hiring  
19 times and improve the background check and adjudication  
20 process to help reduce shortages for child care providers.  
21 We're also working to make it easier for child care  
22 providers to transition from one installation to another  
23 without having to repeat the hiring and background check.  
24 And as many of our child care providers are soldiers'  
25 spouses, initiatives like these enable us to take care of

1 our children but also provide much-needed employment  
2 opportunities for them.

3       Lastly, I assure you the Army is committed to  
4 improving the quality of living in our Army housing. We  
5 accept the responsibility for the current state of Army  
6 housing, and we will regain the trust of our soldiers and  
7 families through immediate, tangible actions that have  
8 already began. We are implementing comprehensive measures  
9 to ensure proper oversight, identify unsafe living  
10 conditions, and improvement of our work order processes  
11 that have immediate results. The Army will improve the  
12 authorities associated with the enforcement of our  
13 privatized partnership requirements, review existing  
14 agreements and policies, and we will ensure that no  
15 reprisals against soldiers and families who share their  
16 concerns with the chain of command will occur.

17       The bottom line is the Army is committed, and we will  
18 continue to take immediate actions to further protect our  
19 soldiers and their families. The senior leadership of the  
20 Army leads a daily action team, receiving statuses from  
21 across our Army on the progress that we are making, and we  
22 are committed to providing safe, healthy living standards  
23 on all of our installations. As the Army continues to  
24 balance its priorities for lethality, readiness, and  
25 modernization, we must keep our soldiers and their families

1 in mind and maintain the quality of life momentum that we  
2 have collectively built.

3 As always, we thank Congress for your support and your  
4 continued investments in our number one resource, our  
5 incredible team of soldiers, families, and civilians. I  
6 appreciate the opportunity to speak before you today and I  
7 look forward to continuing our dialogue. This We'll  
8 Defend. Army Strong.

9 [The prepared statement of Sergeant Dailey follows:]

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1 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

2 Chief Smith.

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1           STATEMENT OF MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER RUSSELL L.  
2 SMITH, USN, MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER OF THE NAVY

3           Chief Smith: Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member  
4 Gillibrand, and distinguished members of this subcommittee,  
5 I am honored to appear before you today on behalf of the  
6 dedicated sailors of the United States Navy who serve on  
7 our global away team to meet the national security  
8 objectives and defend American values and families from all  
9 walks of life. Congress is a critical enabler of our Navy  
10 team through consistent, steady funding, oversight, and  
11 support, you empower us to defend America.

12           Our National Defense Strategy is prominently a  
13 maritime one, and as such, our efforts are focused on  
14 preparing for the war at sea. The increasingly complex  
15 security environment is defined by challenges in the  
16 maritime domain, and the Navy the Nation Needs will be  
17 critical to our ability to maintain free and open use of  
18 the sea as our adversaries and near peer competitors become  
19 more of a global presence. We no longer have an  
20 expectation that we can operate throughout the world's  
21 oceans with impunity. We must become stronger, faster, and  
22 effectively build teams who will compete and win the  
23 high-end war fight, whether it is at a time and place of  
24 our choosing far from home or whether it is in defense of  
25 our homeland closer.

1           While we have the most capable ships and leading-edge  
2 technology, our people remain the greatest advantage  
3 against determined adversaries. We must continue to  
4 strengthen their technical competence and foster innovative  
5 thinking in our workforce. Through changes made to our  
6 Manpower, Personnel, Training and Education enterprise, we  
7 are leveraging modern technology and reimagining  
8 traditional processes to maximize efficiency and regain our  
9 competitive edge. This creates a more agile workforce  
10 prepared to prevail in the maritime battle space when  
11 necessary.

12           Attracting and retaining the best sailors is always  
13 difficult, as our best and brightest are just as attracted  
14 to the private sector. With an unemployment rate in our  
15 target demographic at a 50-year low, it exacerbates this  
16 challenge and requires continued flexibility and  
17 transparency in policies and practices, along with  
18 competitive options for compensation.

19           With regard to retention specifically, we have already  
20 implemented a number of important initiatives. We've  
21 enhanced our parental leave policy for Active-Duty mothers  
22 and fathers. We've refined our dual-military co-location  
23 processes. We've expanded the Career Intermission Program  
24 and increased Active Component/Reserve Component  
25 permeability. This past year, we brought 1,162 reservists

1 back to Active Duty in order to meet manning requirements.

2 We're focusing on positive behaviors through our  
3 four-star culture of excellence governance board, and  
4 amending the health and fitness programs that we have has  
5 resulted in a full 10 percent of our force moving into the  
6 "Excellent" or "Outstanding" categories on the semiannual  
7 PRT program. These changes have already begun to improve  
8 the sailor experience and will find an even greater  
9 foothold when more robust information technology comes  
10 online as a part of the transformation.

11 The Chief of Naval Operations often says a stronger  
12 family equals a stronger fleet. Fleet and Family Readiness  
13 programs enable a resilient and lethal Navy force. We know  
14 that a family's quality of life and available services to  
15 sustain them are inextricably linked with the service  
16 member's retention. As we learn more about the challenges  
17 of Navy families and the experience in Public Private  
18 Venture housing, we are leaning in heavily. We will make  
19 100 percent contact with sailors in government family and  
20 unaccompanied housing, and unit level leaders will visit  
21 all those who welcome assistance. We are resolved to  
22 ensure that sailors remain undistracted by living  
23 conditions that may adversely affect the health, safety,  
24 and well-being of their families.

25 Recognizing there is a generational difference in

1 preferred means to communicate, we're leaning into new ways  
2 to collect feedback and disseminate information in the  
3 place that sailors and their families feel comfortable in.  
4 They're demonstrating a strong preference for tools and  
5 resources in the digital realm of mobile apps and social  
6 media platforms, so in addition to more traditional  
7 methods, we're encouraging leadership to engage via  
8 live-streaming town halls and other online mechanisms that  
9 often provide quicker responses and solutions.

10 Child care remains a persistent critical readiness  
11 issue for the Navy. Many tend to categorize this as a  
12 women's issue, but we have single fathers, single mothers,  
13 and dual working couples, and it is more appropriately seen  
14 as a family issue. This is a nationwide challenge, but as  
15 the Navy has a dominant footprint in some of the most  
16 severely impacted areas, we are the hardest hit, managing  
17 an approximate deficit of 8,000 spaces, nearly 54 percent  
18 of the overall DOD shortfall. We have expanded the hours  
19 and capacity of child development centers and are exploring  
20 partnership options in local communities in order to effect  
21 gains because we can't afford to lose talented sailors who  
22 might believe that the Navy is inconsistent with having a  
23 family.

24 Through sustained commitment to removing distractions,  
25 maturing our training and education initiatives, and

1 increased focus on quality of life, we will ensure sailors  
2 are ready for the fight. The best ships, aircraft, and  
3 technology are of limited value without the best trained  
4 and capable sailors to operate and maintain them.  
5 Investing in personnel and the systems that sustain them  
6 will drive innovation and excellence while retaining our  
7 top talent.

8       We appreciate the efforts of Congress to ensure that  
9 we have all that we need to fight and win. We have and  
10 will continue to improve fleet readiness and retain our  
11 sailors and their families while remaining responsible  
12 stewards of the limited taxpayer resources you entrust to  
13 us.

14       Thank you for your steadfast support for the men and  
15 women of the United States Navy, and I look forward to your  
16 questions, sir.

17       [The prepared statement of Chief Smith follows:]

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1           Senator Tillis: Thank you.

2           Chief Wright.

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1           STATEMENT OF CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT KALETH O. WRIGHT,  
2           USAF, CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE

3           Sergeant Wright: Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member  
4           Gillibrand, and distinguished members of this subcommittee,  
5           thank you for your support and interest in our service men  
6           and women. It's truly an honor for me to address you on  
7           their behalf today. While my wife Tonya, a 20-year veteran  
8           herself, is unable to be here today, I am joined today by  
9           Command Chief Master Sergeant for the Air Force Reserve  
10          Command Ericka Kelly and her successor, Chief Master  
11          Sergeant Tim White.

12          In the past two years, collectively, we have visited  
13          thousands of airmen and family members. These visits  
14          reinforce the fact that Air Force readiness and our airmen  
15          are inextricably linked. Recruiting the best airmen for  
16          the Air Force we need, training and retaining the airmen of  
17          today, and ensuring our airmen and their families are taken  
18          care of directly impacts readiness. Providing airmen with  
19          developmental opportunities allows us to enhance readiness  
20          cohesion and combat effectiveness. Remaining fully  
21          committed to sexual assault prevention and providing better  
22          care, recovery, and judicial advocacy for victims who  
23          report sexual violence, mixed with a dedicated strategy to  
24          reduce suicide rates, ensures we place dignity, respect,  
25          and the health and wellness of all airmen as our priority.

1           A significant component to the quality of life of  
2 airmen is access to quality housing. The health and safety  
3 of our airmen and their families is our priority, and we  
4 share their concerns when we detect instances where housing  
5 objectives are not being met. When there are challenges,  
6 Air Force leaders, we own it. We intervene with the  
7 project owners, advocate for our residents, and support  
8 installation commanders in our mission to take care of  
9 airmen and their families.

10           We rely on and are grateful for your efforts, actions,  
11 and legislation to protect and support our service members.  
12 We welcome your visits to see firsthand the talent and  
13 dedication of our airmen and families. Thank you again for  
14 your time today, and I look forward to your questions.

15           [The prepared statement of Chief Wright follows:]

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1 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

2 Sergeant Major Green.

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1           STATEMENT OF MAJOR RONALD L. GREEN, USMC, SERGEANT  
2 MAJOR OF THE MARINE CORPS

3           Sergeant Green: Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member  
4 Gillibrand, and distinguished members of the subcommittee,  
5 thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on  
6 behalf of all the men and women of your Marine Corps.

7           Taking care of marines and families is a vital  
8 component of our overall readiness and of combat  
9 effectiveness. We recognize that in order to maintain our  
10 great history of being the Nation's expeditionary force in  
11 readiness, we must recruit high-quality men and women to  
12 serve in our corps. To meet future challenges, it is  
13 imperative that we maintain our high standards to  
14 ensure -- [turns mic on] -- when we heed your call.

15          Senator Tillis: Hold on. Just for the record, I  
16 could have sworn your mic was on beforehand.

17          [Laughter.]

18          Sergeant Green: Should I start over, sir, or should I  
19 keep going?

20          [Laughter.]

21          Sergeant Green: We recognize that in order to  
22 maintain our great history of being the Nation's  
23 expeditionary readiness force, we must recruit high-quality  
24 men and women to serve in our corps. To meet future  
25 challenges, it is imperative that we maintain our high

1 standards and ensure that our force in readiness is ready  
2 when we heed your call.

3       Whether a marine intends to serve one tour or retire  
4 from the Marine Corps, we value their commitment and their  
5 sacrifices. To help them meet the goals and plans for  
6 their future, the Marine Corps is focused on ensuring  
7 marines are exposed to transition readiness throughout  
8 their career via the Marine for Life Cycle approach. With  
9 this in mind, the Marine Corps focuses on preparing marines  
10 for postsecondary education, 21st century careers, and  
11 leadership skills that they can employ in a global economy.  
12 We recognize the challenges the military lifestyle and  
13 multiple moves can have on our spouses' careers. The  
14 Marine Corps works with OSD to collaborate with the service  
15 organizations to provide employment assistance and career  
16 training to our military spouses.

17       Ensuring a high quality of life for our marines and  
18 their families is a top priority. We have marine families  
19 impacted by hurricanes still displaced from their homes,  
20 and the marines are working tirelessly to get their  
21 facilities up and running to continue their jobs as  
22 America's elite fighting force. We hold ourselves  
23 accountable that all families have quality housing. We are  
24 reviewing issues in our military housing and holding our  
25 PPV partners responsible for their faith and trust we put

1 in them to provide for the safety and well-being of our  
2 families' homes. We cannot have our marines worried about  
3 safety and the health of their families within their homes  
4 when they should be focused on the mission. The Marine  
5 Corps must keep our faith with our families, marines, and  
6 the values we as Americans hold dear by remaining committed  
7 to our culture of dignity, respect, and trust.

8 We're focusing on policies and initiatives on  
9 preventing sexual assault, and we have recently published  
10 an order covering other prohibited activities, such as  
11 harassment, hazing, bullying, ostracism, and additional  
12 behaviors that go against our core values. We have  
13 increased avenues for reporting, and we must always hold  
14 wrongdoers accountable for their actions.

15 Your marines are smart, resilient, fit, disciplined,  
16 and able to overcome adversity. We recognize the  
17 challenges facing our marines and we continue to resource  
18 our programs to address mental health and the growing  
19 problem of suicide within our ranks. We're focused on  
20 preventive strategies. And while marines provide  
21 themselves or tout themselves to be tough, that does not  
22 mean we ever relent to taking care of our own.

23 With your support, our vibrant Marine Corps will  
24 continue to meet our Nation's call. Again, thank you for  
25 the opportunity to represent all marines today and the

1 sustained support in caring for our marines and their  
2 families.

3 Senator Tillis: I thank you all for your opening  
4 comments.

5 I want to go back to where I ended the first panel. I  
6 know that among many of the enlisted leadership, there were  
7 concerns with the blended retirement option, and the opt-in  
8 rates seem to be pretty disparate, particularly from  
9 between the Army and the Marines.

10 Sergeant Major Dailey, give me some idea of why you  
11 think that is.

12 Sergeant Dailey: Senator, absolutely, and I knew that  
13 you'd be asking that question. And I was concerned at the  
14 end of last fiscal year too.

15 If I could for a second, I'd like to back up on the  
16 journey of how we got here. In FY17, we had a requirement  
17 to train every eligible soldier across the Army. I have to  
18 report that we did a phenomenal job, and Congress gave us  
19 the resources and assets to do that. And we trained  
20 99 percent of our soldiers in FY17 on what their blended  
21 retirement options were. And that category was roughly  
22 soldiers within -- that came in in that fiscal year up to  
23 about 10 to 12 years; they were first, second, and third  
24 term soldiers.

25 In FY18, we had to allow them the opportunity to opt

1 in to the Blended Retirement System, and they could  
2 immediately start putting into what we call the matching  
3 contributions account. And about halfway through the year,  
4 I was just as concerned when I didn't see the numbers as  
5 high. So I started a monthly VCT with my subordinate  
6 sar-majors, and what I said is my intent is not to  
7 influence decisions, but to get 100 percent contact on  
8 making sure they understand they had to make the choice and  
9 making sure that they were fully educated on the value and  
10 benefits of both, based upon their individual financial  
11 goals, sir. And those numbers started to increase a little  
12 bit. But I still wasn't satisfied. Toward the end of the  
13 year, I asked for feedback because I knew that would be a  
14 question of why we were -- and I was concerned at first,  
15 but now I'm not. And I'm going to share with you, sir,  
16 what they told me.

17 First and foremost, the Army had its best retention  
18 year it's had in our recorded history. When asked, the  
19 overwhelming majority of the response was "I plan to stay  
20 20 years, and I feel as if the traditional retirement  
21 system will benefit me better in the future." That's very  
22 positive for us. And we're seeing the similar results this  
23 year. Our retention rates are in historic highs, and we've  
24 already achieved over ninety-some percent of our annual  
25 mission, and it's only February.

1           The second one is our mid-grade NCOs felt they were  
2 too far into their careers to be able to capitalize on the  
3 full investment of the blended retirement matching  
4 contribution. And also, again, that they would want to  
5 stay with the traditional.

6           And then lastly, I think, was the other one, sir, is  
7 that it's the downfall of the -- our enlisted soldiers,  
8 when they retire, their compensation is commensurate to  
9 their service. And we thank Congress for that. But  
10 largely, they have to take that compensation to invest in  
11 one thing that most American families do throughout their  
12 lives, and that's a home. And losing 10 percent of that  
13 compensation at the end of their service, trading that,  
14 hurts them because it's working capital. Under the new  
15 Blended Retirement System, they'd have to wait until age 59  
16 to access those funds without penalty. And that's what  
17 convinced a large portion of them that they'd want to stay  
18 under the traditional system so they can use that working  
19 capital as soon as they get out of service, sir.

20           Senator Tillis: I guess in some respects, I remember  
21 when we were talking about this that we were concerned that  
22 it could potentially hurt attrition or discourage  
23 longer-term service, but it doesn't look like that's been  
24 realized; if anything, quite the contrary -- people are  
25 kind of thinking through what they're going to do with

1 their careers in the Army?

2           Sergeant Dailey: I think so. I think it's -- I don't  
3 think it's negative. I think that soldiers that come in  
4 now understand the value of investment. It has helped us  
5 from a financial literacy perspective. And some of their  
6 responses, and they're very detailed -- I don't want to  
7 read them to you because we don't have that much time -- it  
8 proves that these soldiers are really thinking about their  
9 financial futures. And that's what's important. Our  
10 leaders are talking to our soldiers about investment. I  
11 think that blended retirement in the future will serve them  
12 well.

13           I think there is issues with where we cut it off for  
14 the senior people in service, at 26 years. And I think  
15 that's going to create some challenges for our senior  
16 enlisted folks in the future. I can't predict that, but I  
17 think that may be a challenge for the future that we'll  
18 have to deal with.

19           Senator Tillis: Thank you.

20           Sergeant Major, why do you reckon that the marines are  
21 opting in at about 70 percent?

22           Sergeant Green: Well, sir, I think, number one, sir,  
23 you're absolutely correct. It's causing a -- first, the  
24 Commandant mandated from day one that every marine be  
25 educated on it, online and in person. So once they were



1 educated, we captured the numbers by marking that in our  
2 MAGTF system so that we would know when everyone was  
3 educated. And through that education, which we've never,  
4 ever had a moment in time in my 35 years of serving where  
5 we've done that type of education on financial management  
6 for everyone. So it was very positive. Like Sar-Major  
7 Dailey said, people making life decisions. We're the only  
8 service, you know, average 60 percent 25 years or less.

9       So we encouraged the marines to do that. Through the  
10 app that they could go into or going online, it explained  
11 over a period of time what would happen if you placed that  
12 five percent or one percent or whatever it is in there and  
13 allowed the government to match it over a period, you know,  
14 when you get to 60 years, exactly what your savings was.  
15 So people could really make decisions about their lives,  
16 and families could sit down and talk about it. It was  
17 happening all over the Marine Corps, and it's still  
18 happening, sir, as we go out today and talk to them. So  
19 thank you, sir.

20       Senator Tillis: Thank you. And I know the Navy and  
21 the Air Force are somewhere in between, but I don't  
22 necessarily have an expectation, because the nature of the  
23 different missions, that you would all be at the same  
24 level, but I would like a lot of feedback. And I think we  
25 have to continue to focus on financial literacy here in the

1 Senate. Every year, I walk up and down my post telling  
2 everybody if they're not in the TSP program, they're  
3 leaving money on the table, and that's kind of dumb. You  
4 can't necessarily say it that way. Apparently I can in a  
5 Senate office, but --

6 [Laughter.]

7 Senator Tillis: But I think we need to do that,  
8 because financial literacy is at the root of it for these  
9 younger people. I'm glad to hear, Maj-Sergeant, that you  
10 feel like they're becoming more sophisticated. But they  
11 need to understand now that culture of savings for the  
12 future.

13 We'll start with Air Force and Navy about military  
14 housing. And let me make a general comment first. I like  
15 what I have heard from you all, what I've heard from the  
16 secretaries and the service chiefs. I think we want to  
17 make sure, just from a messaging standpoint, when we talk  
18 about 100 percent inspection, it's really 100 percent  
19 visits and with a welcoming family an inspection, so that  
20 nobody gets the message that all of the sudden mandatory  
21 inspections.

22 If you happen to be in probably more than half of  
23 the -- well over half are acceptable conditions, not the  
24 conditions we're talking about, and you have somebody knock  
25 on your door and say, "I'm here for inspection," if you're

1 knocking on my wife's door, that's not going to end well.  
2 I don't care if you're a marine, sailor, airman, or  
3 soldier.

4       So I think we just need to make sure people understand  
5 this is giving every single military family who is in  
6 housing that they have an opportunity to be heard, and  
7 we're going to escalate the remediation while we fix the  
8 systemic problem. And I don't think I'm at odds with  
9 anybody when I make that statement. I just want to be  
10 clear that people understand the words.

11       So now I want to talk a little bit about -- I met with  
12 General Milley yesterday, and I told him when I was down at  
13 Fort Bragg, I have no doubt that if it had been raised to  
14 his level, some of the things that we had reported in the  
15 committee a couple of weeks ago, that he would have been  
16 all over it.

17       Why didn't we know? What's missing now or what's in  
18 place now that's not working that let this reach this  
19 point? We'll just go down the line. Or actually, we'll  
20 start with Chief Smith and Wright and then move down the  
21 line.

22       Chief Smith: Senator, I think that the thing that's  
23 missing, really, is the way sailors and families want to  
24 communicate now is a little bit more heads-down, in an app,  
25 online, in places that maybe traditionally we aren't

1 looking for those. We're looking for them to call somebody  
2 and ask. We're looking for them to come to a physical town  
3 hall meeting, a place where we're going to have a gathering  
4 of folks. And that's not necessarily where they want to go  
5 to communicate. Some do, some don't.

6       And so we need to be a little bit more diverse in how  
7 we reach out to folks and be a little bit more  
8 intrusive-evasive trying to pull information, rather than  
9 waiting for them to come to us with it, and also make  
10 ourselves available in more spaces and places, both online  
11 and in person, to ensure that we're actually hearing our  
12 sailors.

13       Sergeant Wright: Senator, I think what was missing is  
14 there was a little bit of cloudiness on accountability in  
15 terms of the privatization partners that we work with and  
16 the installation commanders. I think the Secretary of the  
17 Air Force referred to it as a health and safety review, not  
18 necessarily an inspection.

19       So I think now we've tried to be clear about who's  
20 responsible for what, what responsibilities to housing  
21 management office that's on the base and exactly who they  
22 work for. So I think now once all of our commanders go and  
23 do those reviews, they'll be certain about what the lines  
24 of communication are, what the lines of accountability and  
25 responsibility are.

1           Most of these things, probably the first entry is  
2 through our first sergeants, the senior NCOs that are  
3 responsible for taking care of people and people issues.  
4 And in all likelihood, most of those first sergeants and  
5 unit level commanders, they try to take care of these  
6 things without elevating them certainly all the way to the  
7 Chief of Staff, the Secretary, or one of us. But you know,  
8 obviously now with so much attention, I think it'll  
9 certainly be different in that when these things happen and  
10 we're not getting the response back from our privatization  
11 partners, that it'll be elevated up the chain and taken  
12 care of.

13           Senator Tillis: Yeah, we're going to look at -- to  
14 me, anybody that jumps to a conclusion that it was any one  
15 entity that's at fault, then I know that they haven't  
16 studied the issue. We know that the housing providers made  
17 a mistake. We know that there was an inflection point  
18 after the basic allowance for housing was adjusted five or  
19 six years ago. We know that we have 82 or so different  
20 contracts, a couple of dozen different contractors, no  
21 consistent method of engagement and measurement. And I  
22 know that we need to fix it. But I also just wonder  
23 why -- I know that we have the -- I can't remember the  
24 exact title, but housing liaisons or someone on post, where  
25 were they, and why did they not feel like they were ones

1 that were absolutely the advocates to bump it up the chain  
2 of command if their direct commanders did not feel in power  
3 or were not informed?

4 I think part of what we have to do is, you know, we're  
5 not talking about complaining over beige versus oyster  
6 colored paint in the bedrooms. I mean, we're talking about  
7 black mold and leaks and sewage and other issues that  
8 anybody in the chain of command -- and I said this in the  
9 meeting and I'll say it here -- anybody in the chain of  
10 command that says you're just whining if you complain about  
11 that, better not show up in your personnel record because  
12 that'll be the last time it comes through my committee. I  
13 think that I speak for all the people here that that's an  
14 expectation. We take care of them in the same way that  
15 we're providing quality health care.

16 So I'm interested in you all going back and trying to  
17 create some maybe models for what was in your lanes. What  
18 do you think was -- and this is not a witch hunt. This is  
19 a process improvement modernization effort that I want to  
20 play a part in. So I want you all's specific advice on how  
21 we can better connect those dots and have a safety valve.

22 And then finally, I just want to echo what Senator  
23 Warren said on child care. I think we're doing a good job  
24 on child care of making it available, making it affordable,  
25 but I also believe I may take exception with the difference

1 between families that we're sometimes deploying the mother  
2 and the father and taking care of kids and putting them in  
3 a very dangerous situation. And we may have some private  
4 sector issues we need to fix, but this needs to be a  
5 priority. I'm glad that it was, and I'm glad you're doing  
6 it so extraordinarily well, because that, too, is a part of  
7 the total compensation that hopefully when you go out and  
8 you're up against your recruiting challenges, you're well  
9 received. It's just another part of the benefits package.

10 I've actually gone over seven minutes, and enjoyed  
11 every bit of it.

12 [Laughter.]

13 Senator Tillis: But we're going to have a lot  
14 of -- we'll have some questions for the record, but I think  
15 that you all know that I'm particularly interested in  
16 hosting you in my office, having a discussion, having the  
17 committee staff there and other committee members who want  
18 to attend, particularly as it relates to the housing issue.

19 I will tell you, I'll tell everybody, if you're in  
20 North Carolina and you don't feel like somebody's listening  
21 to you, you open up a case in my office, and I'll guarantee  
22 you that somebody will be listening to you. I want these  
23 problems solved, and I want you all to point at Congress  
24 when some of the root causes are congressional decisions in  
25 the past if you find them. We need to have an open

1 dialogue and not assume that any one person needs to charge  
2 this. We need to all go after it.

3       So I appreciate you all being here today, your  
4 continued service, and I look forward to interacting with  
5 you outside of the committee.

6       This committee is adjourned. Since some members were  
7 not here, we may hold the record open until next week, just  
8 for some questions for the record.

9       Committee's adjourned.

10       [Whereupon, at 4:03 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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