

Senate Armed Services Committee  
Advance Policy Questions for the Honorable Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr., 2021  
Nominee to be Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Department of Defense  
OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND SECURITY REVIEW

Duties and Qualifications

**1. Please describe your background, experience, and expertise that qualify you for the position of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) (USD(P&R)), including with respect to military and civilian personnel policy, military readiness, military health organizations and services, and reserve component matters.**

I have spent most of my adult life in service to my country. At 18 years old, I enlisted in the United States Navy, received a Navy ROTC scholarship, and was commissioned a Naval Officer in 1994. During my time in the military, I gained valuable experience leading other men and women in uniform. I have a shared experience with our current service members, having made the same sacrifices they make in order to serve our country. I understand the issues, challenges, and hardships our service members and their families face over the course of their service, having faced those same issues. If confirmed, I am committed to making our service members and their families a top priority to alleviate any possible hardships. I have always put service and others first, and if confirmed, I will do the same as Under Secretary of Defense (P&R).

Following my election to the House of Representative in 2018, I championed policies to improve the day to day lives of our service members. As a member of the House Armed Services Committee and Vice-Chair of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, I advocated and fought for various provisions that affected our service members and their families. The bipartisan Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included several pieces of legislation and amendments that I fought for, including a bill to end military-connected child abuse, provisions to support sexual assault survivors, language to improve diversity and inclusion in the military, and amendments fixing a GI Bill loophole to protect servicemember from predatory, for-profit colleges.

I was proud to introduce bipartisan and bicameral legislation with Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Michael Rounds (R-SD) to improve how the Department of Defense tracks and responds to incidents of child abuse and neglect occurring on military installations involving military dependents. During my time in Congress, I also led efforts to secure dozens of diversity and inclusion provisions in the NDAA. This includes provisions establishing a Chief Diversity Officer reporting directly to the Secretary, directing a tracking and reporting mechanism for supremacist and extremist activity in the Armed Forces, and improving breast cancer screening under TRICARE, as well as language to require the Department of Defense to conduct and implement a new Strategic Plan on Diversity and Inclusion. I also helped introduce bipartisan legislation to create a pilot program within the Department of Defense (DoD) that ensures gainful employment for members of the National Guard, reservists, and their spouses, modeled after the

California Work for Warriors program that connects with local businesses to identify job opportunities for veterans and their spouses and creates a pipeline of qualified candidates for willing employers.

I also worked to advance health care for all our servicemembers. Specifically, I was able to secure language to direct the Department of Defense to establish a comprehensive policy for mental health care for servicemembers, including treatment and care for pain management, opioid addiction, suicide prevention, and PTSD, as well as language to ensure the safety of privatized military housing units. I am especially proud of my work to improve women's health care services. I advocated for the expansion of a pilot program to educate female service members about women's health care at the VA and the unique benefits available to them. The expansion of this program will help our service women get more familiar with the health care resources they have access to when they leave military service.

Also, in honor of the late SPC Vanessa Guillén and the many survivors of military sexual violence who have bravely come forward, I was proud to join efforts to introduce provisions that would revolutionize the military's response to missing service members and reports of sexual harassment and sexual assault by making sexual harassment a crime within the Uniform Code of Military Justice and moving prosecution decisions of sexual assault and sexual harassment cases out of the chain of command. This bicameral legislation, which was also introduced by Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI), provided the necessary support and resources for survivors of sexual assault and sexual harassment in our military. It also advanced coordination of support for survivors of sexual trauma. Our service members and military families deserve to be heard and treated with dignity and respect, and I know that more work needs to be done in order to improve the military's response.

Throughout my career, I have built and led teams to be more productive, and if confirmed, I look forward to leading the men and women of P&R to do the same. We ask our service members to endure more than many of us can imagine, and we must do more to ensure that we provide them with the care and support they need. If confirmed, I would be proud to continue the work I began in Congress and ensure service members and their families receive the support and services they deserve.

## **Major Challenges and Priorities**

### **2. What do you consider to be the most significant challenges you would face if confirmed as the USD(P&R), and how would you address each of those challenges?**

The recruitment and retention of both top military and civilian personnel is of great importance to both the Senate Armed Services Committee and the Department of Defense. The area of cyber security is a concern as the Department of Defense prepares for immediate threats as well as any future threats, but there are other areas where we must maintain the knowledge and expertise within the Department of Defense.

If confirmed, I will review current policies in place in regards to recruitment and retention, to identify shortfalls and successes, and work with the Senate Armed Services Committee to beef up retention efforts where possible. I will also work to ensure that we create opportunities, for both professional and educational growth for both our uniformed and civilian personnel. We must create an environment where personnel are encouraged and incentivized to grow in their career. I am committed to thinking out of the box in order to find solutions.

In order to recruit and retain the best and brightest we must also have a diverse and inclusive force that is representative of our nation's population. If confirmed as the USD (P&R), I would continue to work on the diversity issues I championed in Congress. From requirements for membership of selection boards to represent the diversity of the Armed Forces as a whole, to greater mentoring and career counseling programs, to diversity and inclusion reporting and Advisory Councils, I will push to promote and uplift the diversity that strengthens our Armed Forces. We must also work to improve reporting mechanism, and metrics not only for diversity and inclusion but for many areas.

I believe it is critical that the military do more to ensure all our service members are treated with dignity and respect and sexual harassment and sexual assault are not tolerated. We must enact serious change in order to change the culture of this issue within our Armed Forces. If confirmed, I will work to create processes to ensure service members feel comfortable and supported to come forward. If confirmed I would work with the Senate Armed Services Committee and the experts in the Department of Defense to create real change, that will support victims and hold perpetrators accountable. Ultimately, addressing sexual harassment and sexual assault within the Armed Forces is a pressing issue, and as USD(P&R) I would diligently work to change the culture in our ranks and ensure survivors of sexual assault and sexual harassment in our military have the peace of mind that they'll be heard and treated with dignity and respect.

**3. To the extent that the functions of the Office of the USD(P&R) overlap with those of other Department of Defense (DOD) Components, what would be your approach, if confirmed, to consolidating and reducing unnecessary duplication?**

I believe efficiency and effectiveness are critical, particularly as we seek to focus limited resources on the Department's core mission readiness and modernization needs. If confirmed, I will look at how the Personnel & Readiness enterprise approaches its mission and responsibilities, and will work with my counterparts across OSD and with the Military Departments to ensure that we reduce redundancy or overlap, while recognizing that we must provide oversight and policy for critical programs within the Personnel & Readiness areas of responsibility.

**4. What is your view of the scope and importance of the USD(P&R)'s oversight duties and powers with respect to the Military Services?**

Based on the USD(P&R)'s title 10 statutory roles and responsibilities, I believe that the USD's role is vital to ensuring the operational readiness of our military forces, the sustainment and viability of the All-Volunteer Force, and ensuring a healthy, safe environment free from discrimination for all our Service members, civilian employees, and families. I believe that the USD(P&R) has an important role to play in ensuring that the Military Services are appropriately prioritizing, executing, and resourcing their responsibilities. If confirmed, I will ensure we are providing the appropriate balance of strategic oversight and direction, while serving to enable successful personnel and workforce outcomes and promoting warfighting readiness.

### **Civilian Control of the Military**

**5. If confirmed, how would you adhere to and further the fundamental principle of civilian control of the armed forces?**

If confirmed, I will serve as the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense on all matters related to readiness, Total Force personnel, manpower, family support and health are considered in all of the Department's processes. I expect to provide, if confirmed, the Secretary my best advice and recommendations on the workforce, the impacts to near- and long-term readiness and capability of our policy decisions, and the development of operational plans, and to always provide the Secretary my candid perspective and opinions as we lead the Department into the future.

**6. If confirmed, specifically how would you ensure your inclusion in the discussion, debate, and resolution of U.S. defense and national security issues?**

If confirmed, I would ensure that the USD(P&R) has a seat at the table and a voice on all matters related to the operational use and readiness of our forces, and as appropriate is contributor in the Department's strategic policy deliberations and processes. The workforce, both military and civilian, is the Department's most valued and important resource, and there are few decisions or policies that don't impact the workforce. As the principal staff assistant to the Secretary for all things readiness and workforce related, I would expect to be an active contributor and pledge to, if confirmed, provide candid advice and recommendations to the Secretary of Defense.

### **Personnel Policy Implementation**

**7. If confirmed, what specific personnel policies and processes would you implement or change to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of human resources management—both military and civilian—across the Department?**

If confirmed, I would focus on initiatives that enhance the safety and health of Service members and their families. I would also look for opportunities to increase stability and predictability for our military families regarding assignments and deployments. In addition, I would seek to leverage technology to eliminate bureaucratic practices that create administrative burdens on civilian and military personnel.

**8. What is your understanding of your responsibility, if confirmed, to inform and consult with this Committee and other appropriate committees of Congress, on the implementation of personnel policies directed by law?**

If confirmed, I would be responsible for ensuring that the Department, as appropriate, informs and consults with the Senate Armed Services Committee, and other appropriate congressional committees, on the implementation of personnel policies.

**9. What is your understanding of the period of time within which the Department must implement personnel or health policies directed by law?**

As a former member of Congress and the House Armed Services Committee, I fully understand the frustration when the Department delays its timelines or implementation of the law. While there may be practical obstacles such as lack of resources, I am also aware that bureaucratic processes can lead to late implementation of policies and programs. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that we do everything we can to comply with law in a timely manner, and if there are reasons for delay or the Department requires Congress' help, I will communicate them to you as soon as I can.

**Overall Readiness of the Armed Forces**

**10. How would you assess the overall readiness of the armed forces, specifically their readiness to execute the National Defense Strategy and associated operational plans?**

I believe the armed forces of the United States have the necessary capability, capacity, and readiness to implement the priorities of the President's Interim National Security Strategic Guidance and the National Defense Strategy, and contend with today's threats, while minimizing unnecessary risk to our warfighters wherever possible. As the threat environment continues to evolve, particularly with respect to China's and Russia's emergent abilities to contest U.S. military advantages, readiness must be a persistent priority. If confirmed, I will assess and reinforce all efforts to track and report on the readiness of our military forces. This includes ensuring we can provide relevant information to decision makers, consistent with the way forces are actually employed, to optimize the structure, capability and management of the current and future force.

**11. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to improve personnel readiness, including with regard to the health of the force?**

As Secretary of Defense Austin states in his March 4, 2021, Message to the Force, "Our most critical asset as a Department is our people and we remain the preeminent fighting force in the world because of our personnel." If confirmed, I will focus efforts on growing talent, building a resilient and ready force, and fostering an atmosphere that holds DoD leaders at every level appropriately accountable for building a safe workplace for all. Further, if confirmed, I will ensure that we proactively support the Military

Departments in these areas in order to reduce any potential impacts to readiness, because our readiness to confront current and future challenges is rooted in our people.

### **Measuring Readiness**

**12. What is your understanding of how the Department of Defense and the Military Services actually measure and track readiness? Do you believe the current metrics used to measure and track “readiness” are appropriate, particularly in light of the 2018 National Defense Strategy?**

It is my understanding that the Department currently uses the Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS) to provide an operational-level snapshot of current readiness. It is further my understanding that there is a growing need for strategic-level analysis that would aid senior leaders in identifying possible readiness outcomes of resourcing decisions. If confirmed, I will continue to reinforce the efforts currently underway to reform how readiness is tracked and reported; and I will review and assess the requirements and feasibility of developing and fielding such a strategic predictive readiness assessment capability to anticipate, and ultimately avoid, readiness shortfalls.

**13. If confirmed, what changes would you implement to engage the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness more directly in tracking readiness across the force? In prescribing efforts to remediate or mitigate identified deficiencies in readiness?**

The Department must continue to explore and invest in new technologies that enhance our ability to analyze readiness data to better inform the decision-making process. If confirmed, I will work with my partners in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Military Departments and Military Services to ensure our efforts are all properly aligned with the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance and the National Defense Strategy, and that investments in areas such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other advanced technologies are designed to help see ourselves more clearly.

In order to remediate or mitigate readiness deficiencies, we must first ensure that the recent progress made in building full spectrum readiness endures. This requires that, if confirmed, I be active in the development of policies for manning, training, and equipping the force. We must look to find other mitigation strategies, including building additional capacity, pursuing modernization, exploring alternative capabilities, and considering active/reserve component mix. Furthermore, if confirmed, I will work to improve the Department’s ability to anticipate and address readiness challenges before they become an issue.

### **Non-Deployable Service members**

**14. In your view, should service members who are non-deployable for more than 12 consecutive months be subject either to separation from the service or referral to the Disability Evaluation System, as is current Department policy?**

It is my understanding that the Department's longstanding policy requires evaluation for continued service, not mandated separation. Individuals who can no longer meet the requirements of service, which often includes deployments, should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if continued service is appropriate. To do otherwise would adversely impact the force readiness and place an undue burden on the remainder of the force to fulfill deployment requirements.

**15. Under what circumstances would the retention of a service member who has been non-deployable for more than 12 months be "in the best interest of the service"?**

I would expect that the circumstances are highly individualized. It is my understanding that the Secretaries of the Military Departments have broad latitude to consider all aspects of a member's ability to serve when making such a determination. Considerations such as whether or not the individual specialty has a high level of deployment requirements, the level of technical expertise, and the health of the career field should all play in such a determination.

**16. In your view, how should this policy be applied to service members with HIV? To service members who identify as transgender?**

I believe that all individuals should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis under this policy. As with any personnel policy, fair and equitable treatment, regardless of the medical condition involved, is paramount if the Department is to maintain the integrity and credibility with the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and guardians. If confirmed, I will work closely with all appropriate stakeholders to ensure Service members are treated with dignity and respect in the execution of all personnel policies and processes.

**17. The new transgender policy (DODI 1300.28) provides that "any determination that a transgender Service member is non-deployable at any time will be consistent with established Military Department and Service standards, as applied to other Service members whose deployability is similarly affected in comparable circumstances unrelated to gender transition."**

**Please provide an example of a "comparable circumstance" that would be used to determine deployability of a transgender service member.**

Given the highly individualized nature of this policy, speculation on my part would not be appropriate. I assure you that if confirmed, I will work closely with all appropriate stakeholders to ensure all Service members are treated with dignity and respect in the execution of all personnel policies and processes.

**18. In your view, should a service member's readiness to perform the required specific missions, functions, and tasks in the context of a particular deployment also be considered in determining whether that service member is deployable?**

Yes. It is my understanding that the Combatant Commands often have specific deployment criteria and that the Military Departments consider these specialized requirements when identifying individuals to fulfill these requirements.

**19. What are your ideas for addressing the challenges of medical non-deployability in the reserve components?**

I am not aware of the challenges to the Reserve Components regarding medical non-deployability. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Military Departments to address any challenges that may exist.

### **Collaboration between the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs**

**20. In your view, how effective has DOD/VA collaboration been to date, and what would you do to enhance it?**

It is critically important for our Service members that the DoD and VA work closely together to ensure we support those who have served this Nation. While DoD and VA have come a long way to better collaborate across the myriad of issues, there's always room for improvement. If I am confirmed, support for our Service members will always be at the top of my mind; therefore, I would continue frequent and reoccurring engagements with my counterpart at the VA, so we can address emergent topics, break through barriers, and enhance collaboration between our two departments. In addition, I would continue to use the Joint Executive Committee (JEC) as the vehicle to facilitate collaboration, establish joint strategies, and to carry out and monitor joint initiatives and programs.

**21. If confirmed, how would you improve the seamless transition of each service member as they move from service member to veteran status?**

If confirmed, I will fully commit to supporting our Service members and their families as they navigate their transition from military to civilian life. Accordingly, I will champion DoD's transition programs and collaborate with private and public supporters to build upon current successes, achieve ever-improving outcomes, and provide our transitioning Service members with the support they need to empower and enable them to become successful, visible, active Veterans equipped to reach their full potential and strengthen their communities.

**22. What is your view of the effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), and how might it be improved?**



From the passage of the VOW (Veterans Opportunity to Work) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 to the transition assistance related legislation included in the FY2019 NDAA, Congress has helped the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) evolve into a highly effective and collaborative interagency effort that provides significant support and services to our Service members. If confirmed, I will build upon current successes and work to improve outcomes for TAP eligible Service members by addressing barriers that could potentially prevent successful transition to civilian life.

**23. What is your assessment of the efficacy of TAP services and support to members of the Reserve Components as they transition from federalized/mobilized status back to civilian life and participation in their assigned reserve and guard units or positions?**

I believe TAP is an effective and collaborative interagency effort that provides the right level of support and services to our Service members, to include TAP eligible members of the Reserve Components. If confirmed, I will ensure efficacy, capture lessons learned, and identify improvements through regular assessments and feedback from transitioning Service members, the Military Service, interagency partners, and Reserve Component forums.

**24. In your view, how can TAP be improved to provide better support to members of the reserve components?**

Given the constant changing environment and economy into which Service members are transitioning, TAP must remain innovative, responsive, and collaborative as we work the Military Services, interagency partners, and non-governmental organizations to continuously improve transition services and support. If confirmed, I will build upon current successes and achieve ever-improving outcomes for TAP eligible Service members from all Components by addressing barriers that could potentially prevent successful transition to civilian life.

**25. If confirmed, what goals would you establish in your role as the co-chair of the Joint Executive Committee?**

First and foremost, if confirmed, I would want to support as much as possible and enhance the open lines of communication between DoD and VA. My goal would also be to support Secretary Austin's priorities within the Joint Executive Committee (JEC) framework. Defending the nation, enhancing partnerships, and taking care of our people are themes found throughout JEC initiatives and goals. As VA and DoD continue to develop the next Joint Strategic Plan, my goal is to keep the Secretary's priorities at the forefront, and to ensure those joint objectives are successfully and promptly completed.

**Extremism**

**26. What is your view of the prevalence and effect of extremism within the armed forces?**

I believe that the vast majority of Service members and civilian employees in DoD honor the oath each took to support and defend the U.S. Constitution. They perform their duties with integrity and the vast majority do not espouse the abhorrent views associated with extremist doctrine.

**27. If confirmed, what would you recommend and how would you work with the Military Services to eliminate extremism within the ranks?**

If confirmed, I will review the recommendations proposed by Secretary Austin's Countering Extremist Activity Working Group and support the great team of experts and professionals working to further an environment of dignity and respect within the Department.

**Diversity and Inclusion**

**28. In general, what is your assessment of the diversity of each of the Department of Defense military and civilian workforces?**

I understand that the Department leverages a variety of programs to promote diversity for both its military and civilian workforces. A diverse force means a stronger force, and I share Secretary Austin's sentiments that the Department's efforts have not yet realized the significant gains needed to ensure that our military and civilian workforce appropriately reflects the diversity of the United States. I believe that we can do more to improve diverse representation among our senior military and civilian leaders. Under Secretary Austin's leadership, I understand the Department is working to build diversity, equity, and inclusion into all aspects of its work and, if confirmed, I look forward to supporting this critical effort.

**29. If confirmed, how would you increase diversity and inclusion in the armed forces, and work toward the goal of ensuring that the nation's military, at all levels, especially within the senior officer ranks, reflects the broad diversity of the nation?**

We have not seen the type of progress that would better position the Department to ensure that racial and ethnic minority and female Service members have the same career advancement opportunities as their counterparts. If confirmed, I would start by looking at what steps have been taken thus far, identifying whether these steps have been effective, and determining where we need to adjust or expand upon the current efforts of the Military Departments and other DoD components. For example, we need to look at career cohort data to better understand whether we need a better pipeline of diverse applicants, whether minorities and women are separating at higher rates than their peers, and whether unnecessary barriers exist to career progression.

**30. If confirmed, how would you increase diversity and inclusion within the Department's civilian workforce, especially at the senior General Schedule and Senior Executive Service levels?**

On June 25, 2021, President Biden signed an Executive Order [*EO 14035, "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce,"*] to cultivate a workforce that draws from the full diversity of the Nation. If confirmed, I will support the Administration's ongoing efforts to improve diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility for the civilian workforce. Specifically, I will work to strengthen the Department's ability to recruit, hire, retain, and promote diverse talent, and remove barriers to equal opportunity.

**31. How would you increase geographical diversity in the armed forces, especially from areas of the country and local communities that are currently underrepresented in the force?**

It is my understanding that today's youth do not generally have a connection to the military or an understanding of what it means to serve. Broad, expansive communication efforts and strategic messaging are critical to changing this dynamic. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the Department and the Services proactively engage with community leaders across the nation to shift the perceptions of the military and to emphasize the significant opportunities for leadership, education, and experience available through military service.

**Sexual Assault Prevention and Response**

**32. In your view, how adequate and effective are the policies, programs, and training been that DOD and the Military Services have put in place to prevent and respond to sexual assault?**

DoD has made some progress in this area over the years, but it is not nearly enough. Our Service members deserve a workplace free of sexual assault and sexual harassment. This is an area I know the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military has been carefully considering. It is important for the Secretary and President to have the decision space to consider IRC recommendations, and if confirmed, I look forward to closely reviewing the recommendations and advising and supporting Secretary Austin and Deputy Secretary Hicks in their decisions. If I am confirmed, enhancing sexual misconduct prevention and response policies will be one of my highest priorities.

**33. If confirmed, specifically what would you do to increase DOD-wide focus on the *prevention* of sexual assaults?**

I also know Secretary Austin directed a number of actions for the Department to move out on right away, in order to enhance the DoD's prevention efforts. If I am confirmed, not only will I make this one of my highest priorities, but I will look at how we can leverage data and research about what approaches work best and how best to apply them at the local level. Command climate tools will undoubtedly be part of the solution. I would assess how we can give commanders more tools to identify climate problems that may increase risk of sexual assault while also ensuring Service leaders at all levels can

quickly identify risk areas and move fast to correct them. If confirmed, I also look forward to carrying out Secretary Austin's direction and working with the Military Departments and military Services to establish a DoD-wide violence prevention workforce

**34. What is your assessment of the potential impact, if any, of proposals to remove from military commanders case disposition authority over felony violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, including sexual assaults?**

I am aware that the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military has been considering this topic as it relates to sexual assault. If confirmed, I look forward to working with leaders in the Office of General Counsel of the Department of Defense and the Military Departments to carry out the Secretary of Defense and President's direction on this matter. I also believe we must strengthen the tools and information that our commanders have to better prevent sexual assault and other offenses from happening in the first place. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is critical in this aspect. If confirmed, I will closely support and work to strengthen prevention efforts, including with enhanced command climate tools.

**35. What is your assessment of the Department's implementation of protections against retaliation—most notably social ostracism and reputation damage—for reporting sexual assault?**

Stopping retaliation is critical. As a former House Armed Services Committee member, I recall that many victims are deeply concerned about retaliation, including from peers and supervisors. If we can better address concerns over retaliation, I'm confident this could lead to more victims making the choice to come forward, connect with support and care services, and aid in the Department's efforts to hold alleged offenders appropriately accountable. If confirmed, I will work to evaluate and understand what those barriers have been and look to see what solutions we can implement.

**36. In your view, do military and civilian leaders in the Department have the training, authorities, and resources needed to hold subordinate commanders and supervisors accountable for the prevention of and response to sexual assault and retaliation? If not, what additional training, authorities, or resources do you believe are needed, and why?**

If confirmed, I will closely evaluate whether all our leaders have what they need, how the P&R enterprise can better support them, and how the P&R teams exercise oversight to ensure compliance with our efforts and requirements to stop these behaviors. I also want to ensure that the Department continues to make progress on the recent advancements on command climate tools as part of our efforts to stop sexual assault and retaliation. If confirmed, I look forward to working with our partners in Congress to help better strengthen our prevention efforts.

**Sexual Harassment in the Armed Forces**

**37. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of the sexual harassment programs of the Department, including those of the Military Departments?**

Although I understand the Department has published new and updated policies to counter harassment, the Department is not where it needs to be when it comes to preventing sexual harassment.

If I am confirmed, it will be one of my highest priorities to evaluate the effectiveness of the Department's recent prevention initiatives, to include the use of command climate tools. Prevention of sexual harassment is not only critical to ensuring the unit cohesion necessary to be effective on the battlefield, it is fundamental to our values and ensuring that every Service member is treated with dignity and respect.

**38. In your view, do methods for tracking the submission and monitoring the resolution of informal complaints of harassment or discrimination provide DOD leaders, supervisors, and managers with an accurate picture of the systemic prevalence of these adverse behaviors in the military force?**

As I understand it, the Department measures the prevalence of harassing and discriminatory behaviors by leveraging scientific surveys – assessing experiential data to measure rates rather than relying solely on reports of such behaviors. These surveys provide a sense of scope and help inform the targeted efforts needed to address the areas of greatest concern. That said, I believe it is essential that leaders take appropriate action on informal reports of these behaviors and track them in order to understand the full scope of the issue.

**39. If confirmed, what actions will you take to improve the quality of investigations into allegations of sexual harassment in the force?**

Leaders should be held appropriately accountable to ensure thorough, effective, and timely investigations of sexual harassment complaints. If confirmed, I look forward to carefully reviewing the recommendations from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, and supporting both Secretary Austin and the President so that the Department can effectively move forward in addressing this problem in a comprehensive way.

**40. Does the Department's method for recording the outcomes of informal complaints of harassment or discrimination provide DOD leaders, supervisors, and managers with a means of identifying repeat perpetrators in the military?**

If confirmed, I will examine the intersection between DoD's new anti-harassment policies and its long-standing military equal opportunity and civilian equal employment opportunity policies. I will also work to ensure that the Department develops a comprehensive plan to prevent repeat offenses.

## **Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in Military Families**

**41. What is your understanding of the extent of domestic violence and child abuse in the military services, and, if confirmed, what actions will you take to address these issues?**

I recognize that domestic violence and child abuse are serious public health issues that have no place, but do exist, in our military. If confirmed, I commit to determining if these issues are receiving the attention they deserve and the necessary resources to support effective prevention and response.

**42. In your view, what more can the Department do to *prevent* child abuse and domestic and intimate partner violence?**

It is my understanding that the Department has made the prevention of interpersonal violence, in all its forms, a priority. If confirmed, I will ensure prevention of child abuse and domestic/intimate partner violence are included in the Department's overarching interpersonal violence prevention efforts.

**43. Do you believe that the Department's Family Advocacy Program strikes the right balance between healing families and holding individuals accountable for acts of domestic violence and child abuse?**

I strongly believe that prevention, support of those impacted, and appropriate accountability for those engaged in these actions are all essential components of the Department's program. If confirmed, I commit to gaining a deeper understanding of the program and how well it addresses each component.

## **Department of Defense Education Activity, DOD Schools, and Dependent Education**

**44. What is your assessment of the overall quality of DOD schools?**

I believe DoDEA schools provide a high quality education, on par with the best public school systems in the United States. Military dependents deserve no less.

**45. In your view, are DODEA's headquarters overhead costs, including its funding and employment of personnel above the school level, comparable to such costs in highly-ranked public school districts in the United States? Please explain your answer.**

Although I do not know all the details, I am aware that DoDEA, along with the rest of the Department, has gone through several rounds of Headquarters staffing reviews and reductions, the result of which is a lower overhead than that of comparable public school systems. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that DoDEA is properly resourced for student success.

**46. Should the eligibility requirements for military dependents to attend DOD schools be modified in any way, in your opinion? If so, what modifications would you propose, if confirmed?**

I do not have enough information at this time to offer an opinion on the eligibility requirements or whether they should be modified. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress to ensure that the Department has the resources and authorities needed to assess the impact that access to DoDEA schools has on recruitment, retention, and military family readiness.

**47. What lasting impacts, if any, do you believe the COVID-19 pandemic will have on the way DOD schools are run and how DOD dependents who attend those schools learn?**

As I understand it, DoDEA had an effective education program during the COVID-19 pandemic. They were able to switch to remote instruction in just a few short days due to previous efforts to implement education best practices for blended learning in all their schools. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing this push to incorporate technology and adaptive curriculum into daily practice which will ultimately allow for individualized and differentiated instruction to meet every student where they are with what they need to succeed.

**48. Do you believe DODEA should further expand its capabilities to deliver online education going forward? Please explain your answer.**

It is my understanding that DoDEA is conducting a pilot program directed by the FY2021 NDAA to expand access to its virtual school. If confirmed, I will evaluate the results of that pilot and ensure DoDEA is resourced to maximize education tools for its students.

**49. What is your assessment of the preparedness of DOD schools to respond and react appropriately to active shooter emergencies?**

The Department has an obligation to ensure that all students and staff are trained and aware of procedures to follow in the event of an active shooter situation. I understand that DoDEA has partnerships with each of the installations, Military Departments, and COCOMs to assist in the observation and evaluation of emergency drills and their effectiveness. If confirmed, I will ensure DoDEA continues its comprehensive review of the school security assessment and develop quantifiable information to determine improvements.

**50. How do you assess current class sizes (student to teacher ratios) throughout DODEA schools, and do you recommend they be adjusted? If so, why?**

I believe that well-resourced schools and an appropriate number of teachers in each school are essential to higher levels of student achievement. In keeping with its responsibility to be good stewards of taxpayer money, the Department has an obligation

to invest in its students as well as ensure the use of fiscal resources in a way that is both deliberate and responsible. If confirmed, I will review the resource requirements of DoDEA to ensure the Department meets these obligations.

**51. In your view, how, if at all, should the quality and availability of local public education factor into Department and military service basing decisions?**

Family readiness is directly linked to military readiness and facilitating access to quality education for military dependents is vital to the health of the Force. If confirmed, I would evaluate how the quality and availability of local public education are considered in the Military Services' basing processes and work with the Military Services to make any necessary improvements. I will also review any impact on the DoDEA workforce, family readiness, and the Department's ability to retain high quality Service members and their families.

**52. Are you confident that DODEA has in place the policies and processes to ensure that:**

- **Allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment by a student in locations under the jurisdiction of DODEA are properly investigated?**

If confirmed, I will work to ensure there are policies and procedures in place to appropriately address all such allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment. It is my understanding that DoDEA has a robust Civil Rights program with appropriate reporting and tracking tools and has implemented a collaborative process designed to assist the organization in taking reasonable steps to eliminate unlawful discrimination in DoDEA schools, programs, activities, and workplaces, as required under Executive Order 13160, "Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Race, Sex, Color, National Origin, Disability, Religion, Age, Sexual Orientation, and Status as a Parent in Federally Conducted Education and Training Programs."

- **Information documenting such misconduct, if substantiated, is recorded in the permanent record of the offending student and that any school to which that student subsequently transfers is made aware of that information, as appropriate?**

It is my understanding that DoDEA policy requires the documentation of substantiated misconduct to be included in the student record which transfers upon the student's enrollment into a new school.

**53. If confirmed, what actions would you direct to ensure that DODEA takes all appropriate actions to hold its teachers, other employees, and students accountable for acts of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and unlawful discrimination?**

There is zero room for discrimination, harassment, or assault of any kind in DoD or DoDEA. If confirmed, I will examine the adequacy of the training and resources



currently available to DoDEA teachers, staff, and students, and I will work with the Congress to address this or any other problem that affects the security, safety, and well-being of military families and DoD civilian employees. I will also work to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to hold accountable any teachers, employees, and students involved with substantiated allegations of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and unlawful discrimination.

### **Juvenile Problematic Sexual Behavior**

**54. What is your assessment of Department and service programs to respond to, investigate, adjudicate, and document allegations of juvenile problematic sexual behavior?**

I agree that this is a serious issue that will require Departmental focus, with the understanding that the department has no jurisdiction to adjudicate such cases. I will review existing processes to ensure they adequately address this important issue, and commit to providing the resources and support necessary to appropriately respond to these types of behaviors.

**55. How can these programs be improved?**

It is my understanding that the Department has made significant progress in responding to these behaviors through a multi-disciplinary approach that involves many offices and programs. If confirmed, I will be committed to ensuring that work continues with an eye on opportunities for sustained improvement.

### **Military Service Academies**

**56. Over the last year, each of the Military Service Academies experienced significant violations of their respective honor codes, which prohibit lying, cheating, or stealing.**

**In your view, how should the Military Service Academies handle honor code violations?**

I am aware that Military Service Academies use their honor codes to uphold high standards and prepare each Cadet and Midshipmen to become commissioned officers. If confirmed, I look forward to learning about how each of the Service Academies' honor codes is applied to better understand their meaning and intent, and to ensure they have the maximum positive impact.

**57. What is your assessment of the diversity of cadets and midshipmen enrolled in each of the Military Service Academies? What measures can be taken to increase diversity in the Academies?**

Ensuring diversity at the Military Service Academies is essential for the Department to obtain greater diversity in our military leadership ranks at large. Military Service Academies develop our future leaders. Strengthening those applicant pools with diverse talent will serve to increase DoD's minority and female officer accession rates, and help us ensure our force continues to maintain an advantage in the competition for talent.

If confirmed, I will work to improve DoD's marketing, recruitment, and community partnership efforts to create a more diverse applicant pool for the Military Service Academies, as well as for ROTC commissioning programs.

**58. What is your assessment of the efficacy of the policies and processes in place across the Military Service Academies to prevent sexual assault and sexual harassment, and to ensure that cadets and midshipmen who do report assault or harassment are not subject to retaliation—social ostracism and reputation damage—in particular?**

I think it is very clear that the Department is not where it needs to be in preventing sexual assault and harassment, as well as stopping all forms of retaliation, including from peers and supervisors. If confirmed, evaluating the Department's policies and processes related to sexual assault, harassment, and retaliation will be among my highest priorities.

If confirmed, I will do as much as possible to ensure victims do not fear retaliation and the Military Service Academies properly address all forms of problematic behaviors to ensure we grow the right leaders for the future.

**59. What is your assessment of the efficacy of suicide prevention programs at each Military Service Academy?**

I know, from my time on the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee, that our youngest are often at highest risk – so certainly our cadets and midshipmen are a population we must consider carefully in our efforts. I am deeply committed to supporting our military community, which includes the future leaders at our Military Service Academies. If confirmed, I would review suicide prevention programs and their efficacy in order to identify opportunities to enhance policies and practices.

**60. Do you believe the current five-year minimum active-duty service commitment for Military Service Academy graduates is sufficient return on investment for the U.S. military and the American taxpayer?**

I understand the five-year minimum active-duty service obligation for Military Service Academy graduates has been in place and remained largely unchanged for several years. If confirmed, I will assess the current service obligation policies, determining if the return on investment has been successful, and if they should be changed.

**61. In your view, do the Military Service Academies contribute to the pool of military officer accessions commensurate with their attendant costs? Why or why not?**

It is my view that the Military Service Academies have historically produced high quality commissioned officers. If confirmed, I will analyze the benefits and challenges that accompany these programs to ensure we efficiently maximize the resources provided to the Service Academies.

**62. Given the provisions of title 10, U.S. Code, applicable to each of the Military Service Academies, under what conditions would you deem it appropriate, if confirmed, to permit a military officer to play professional sports prior to completing at least two consecutive years of commissioned service following graduation from an Academy?**

I am aware there have been a few talented athletes approved to participate in professional sports prior to serving at least two consecutive years of commissioned service following their Service Academy graduation. If confirmed, I will evaluate current policies regarding this issue and, in conjunction with Department leadership, determine if a change to the current policy is warranted.

### **Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (SROTC)**

**63. In your view, does the Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (SROTC) program remain a viable source of officer accessions?**

SROTC is an avenue where students can pursue an undergraduate education at a civilian institution, while also training to become a military commissioned officer. As I understand, SROTC is the DoD's largest source for officer accession production. If confirmed, I will review policies and procedures to ensure the Department strategically manages this program in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

**64. What is your assessment of the diversity in our ROTC programs? What measures can be taken to increase diversity in the ROTC?**

SROTC units are strategically located in geographical areas and at various universities to allow maximum opportunities for diverse populations to serve our nation upon commissioning. If confirmed, I will review those areas that serve diverse and underrepresented populations to take full advantage of their talents through opportunities to serve.

**65. In your view, should the Military Services continue to operate SROTC units at colleges and universities that fail to meet their minimum annual commissioning requirements? If not, please explain the factors you believe should be used to determine which units should be terminated.**

I am aware there are SROTC units that struggle to meet certain commissioning requirements. If confirmed, I will review the circumstances surrounding those units challenged to meet minimum viability and look for ways, including consulting with Congress, to get the most out of current SROTC reach and resources without losing representation in certain geographical areas.

**66. How would you modify the SROTC scholarship program to attract the top talent that our armed forces need?**

I believe that we have SROTC at some of the top colleges and universities in the country. If confirmed, I would encourage the Military Services to recruit and retain top talent at every college and university participating and focus efforts on some of the underutilized locations. I would also look for opportunities to leverage technology to attract those with skills needed within the Defense Department.

**Health Care Quality and Access**

**67. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take with respect to each of the following:**

- **Eliminating performance variability throughout the Military Health System (MHS).**

If confirmed, I intend to first, dive deeply into the measures and metrics that MHS leaders use to set and monitor key performance goals for medical readiness, quality, safety, access, satisfaction and other vital indicators. As part of this deep dive, I will determine what the positive and negative outliers may be in terms of performance and understand why that variability may exist – whether due to circumstances unique to geography, size of medical facility, resourcing decisions, or leadership challenges.

If confirmed, I will ask MHS leaders to put forward performance improvement plans and milestones for areas where variability is high, and performance is poor. The intended result of the deep dives is to ensure that the MHS establishes standard processes based on best practices to support readiness, outcomes, and satisfaction. I also will ensure the Defense Health Agency codifies these standard processes in official guidance and establishes accountability processes to eliminate unwarranted performance variability across the MHS. I understand that reducing variability requires continuous assessment and probing questions. If confirmed, I will hold regular management reviews of MHS performance as part of my oversight responsibilities.

- **Improving health outcomes and the experience of care for all of the Department’s beneficiaries—in both the direct and purchased care components of the MHS.**

If confirmed, one of my first steps will be to meet with military families, as well as with leaders of the many military service organizations that advocate for their members. In addition to other military family quality-of-life considerations, I will be asking very specific questions about the measures that matter to them for health care services, regardless of where they receive their care. Working with MHS leaders, Combatant Commanders, and the Military Departments, I will invest in customer-facing tools that make it easier and more efficient for beneficiaries to interact with their provider and to manage their own health care. My goal is to enhance our military family's experience in both the direct care and purchased care arenas. The mentioned strategy of establishing MHS standard processes based on best practices to support readiness, outcomes and patient satisfaction is what I will use to measure success.

- **Creating a value-based MHS—ensuring the delivery of accessible, high-quality health care at a reasonable cost to both the Department and its beneficiaries.**

It is important to ensure the right outcomes are prioritized. In the long-term, high quality care leads to more efficient use of resources – both financial and personnel.

If confirmed, I will ensure the MHS continues to create value by focusing on high quality health care, eliminating waste, reducing unnecessary variation and implementing longer-term opportunities to improve health services for all DoD serves. There are certain elements of military medicine and preparedness that require resources not incurred by civilian health systems. Specifically, value must be assessed relative to our core missions. I am aware of the MHS' performance in battlefield care, as well as its impressive ability to reduce the number of disease and non-battle injury rates over the course of recent conflicts. If confirmed, I intend to review previous assumptions about what military medical treatment facilities contribute to readiness. I want to ensure we have a comprehensive view of value and readiness – that addresses the full spectrum of operations, as well as family readiness, and support to civilian authorities.

### **Military Health System Reform**

#### **68. Do you support the implementation of the Military Health System (MHS) reforms mandated by the NDAs for FYs 2017, 2019, 2020, and 2021?**

If confirmed, I will work with Congress to ensure effective implementation of Military Health System reforms. The MHS should be focused on its core readiness mission and providing quality health care to all beneficiaries in accordance with guidance provided by Congress. Consolidating the administration and management of the military hospitals and clinics, along with public health and research activities, under the Defense Health Agency as directed by Congress will improve overall readiness, effectiveness, and efficiency.

#### **69. If confirmed, what would you do to change the culture within the military services, such that their leadership will fully embrace changes necessary to improve the readiness of the medical force?**

If confirmed, I will work with the Military Departments to understand their readiness requirements to maintain a ready medical force and help facilitate making sure the Department institutes changes required to effectively meet those requirements. I am confident that the leadership will support efforts to meet their requirements to maintain and improve the readiness of the medical force.

**70. In your view, are the Military Departments' medical forces properly sized to meet the joint medical requirements set forth in operational plans implementing the 2018 NDS and in the recent Joint Medical Estimate?**

If confirmed, I will make it a priority to understand the joint medical force requirements and work with the Joint Staff and the Military Departments to assure that those requirements are addressed within the context of the overall Departmental requirements and resourcing processes.

**71. In your view, is DOD's current education, training, and career development approach sufficient to ensure a military trauma care workforce that is ready to deliver expert health care (including combat casualty care) in support of the full range of military operations, domestically and abroad?**

My understanding is that maintaining this critically important workforce is challenging, due to many factors. If confirmed, I will review the programs in place to address this critical component of the ready medical force. I will work with DoD leadership to make sure that we adequately resource military relevant research and development, education, training, and career development to maintain a medical force prepared to provide world class care across the range of military operations they will be called on to support.

**Mental and Behavioral Health Care**

**72. If confirmed, what actions would you take to ensure that sufficient mental and behavioral health resources are available to service members in theater and to service members and families at home station locations, including members and families of the reserve components?**

If confirmed, I will ensure DoD continues to provide accessible, quality mental and behavioral health resources to our Service members and their families. This includes inpatient, outpatient, deployment embedded health care services, child and family behavioral health care, and tele-behavioral health, supplemented by family programs such as the Military Crisis Line, providing confidential, immediate help 24/7 at no cost to active-duty, Guard and Reserve members, and their families. I will routinely review our measures of access to mental health care to ensure they meet our standards.

**73. In your view, how could the Department better integrate the provision of mental and behavioral health care services and non-medical counseling?**

If confirmed, I will seek to promote mental health professionals that are positioned to provide the best possible care based on evidence-based best practices, and improve the whole health of patients through compliance with current standard of care clinical practice guidelines, including recommendations for non-medical counseling and social context support systems.

**74. If confirmed, what would you do to improve the delivery of behavioral health services in the MHS through telehealth? How would you expand such capabilities in both the direct and purchased care components of the MHS?**

If confirmed, I will work with the MHS to enable tele-behavioral health services that are leveraged for mental health assessments, ongoing behavioral health treatment, and surge support for pre-deployment evaluations, and work to expand services to include continued beneficiary care through consistent and stable patient/provider relationships.

**Suicide Prevention**

**75. If confirmed, how would you strengthen the Department’s suicide prevention programs to reduce the number of suicides among service members, including in the reserve components, and their families?**

Suicide prevention has to be one of the top priorities for the Department. Every suicide is not only a loss for our Armed Forces but also forever changes the lives of families and communities. If confirmed, I would ensure suicide prevention initiatives are based on the latest research and effective. This includes focusing on reducing risk for Service members and their families – such as addressing relationship, financial, and mental health challenges, among others – and also enhancing protective factors – those skills, strengths, and resources that help people deal more effectively with stressful events. In addition, I would continue to collaborate with leaders across the Department of Defense, as well as the Department of Veterans Affairs, and our partners in academia and elsewhere in the non-government sector to evolve our strategies and identify new, evidence-based methods to prevent suicide.

**76. If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to provide additional suicide prevention programs in rural and isolated locations, such as Fort Wainwright, Alaska?**

I understand the Department uses a public health model to address suicide – that is, ensuring all in the community are involved in preventing suicide. If confirmed, I would ensure the Department fully implements this type of comprehensive health approach to suicide prevention. We must ensure we are providing medical care and treatment, while emphasizing broader efforts to help individuals well before they may become at risk of harming themselves. Additionally, we must continue to investigate and learn why there may be higher concentrations of suicides in a particular area and what unique factors may be at play for remote installations. If confirmed, I will ensure we are looking at research and programs with a focus on our Service members and families in rural and isolated

locations, and promoting their help-seeking, access to care, and connectedness to family, friends, and fellow Service members.

### **Officer Personnel Management System**

**77. In your view, what actions can be taken to improve permeability between the active and reserve components?**

In order to increase the desirability to serve and retain Service members from across all components, if confirmed I intend to investigate career flexibility initiatives to improve permeability between components.

**78. Do you believe current DOD and Military Service procedures and practices for reviewing the records of officers pending the President's nomination for promotion or assignment, especially those with adverse or reportable information, are sufficient to enable fully-informed decisions by the Secretaries of the Military 80. Departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, and the President?**

It is my understanding that the Department and the Military Services maintain a rigorous process to properly evaluate officer qualifications, past performance, potential, and any adverse or reportable information to ensure decisions made by senior leaders are well-informed. If confirmed, I will work with the Joint Staff and the Service Chiefs to ensure that the procedures and practices that are in place are sufficient to enable fully-informed decisions by the Department's leadership.

**79. Recent NDAs provided significant flexibility to the constraints imposed by the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA). In your judgement are any additional authorities required for the military departments to manage their officers better to implement the National Defense Strategy?**

I appreciate the work of Congress and of this committee to improve the readiness of the Services by modernizing the law governing DoD personnel policies. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department continues to explore ways to improve both law and policy to better meet the needs of the Service member, while providing the flexibility desired by talented leaders in an increasingly competitive job market. Any such research and discussions will continue to be communicated to this Committee along with any future requests for legislative changes to improve our competitive edge in the ongoing competition for talent.

### **Joint Officer Management**

**80. In your view, do the requirements associated with becoming a Joint Qualified Officer (JQO), and the link between attaining joint qualification and eligibility for promotion to General/Flag Officer rank, continue to be consistent with the operational and professional demands of military service line officers?**



As I understand it, officer careers are tightly managed to meet Military Department specific milestones and operational demands. If confirmed, I will work with all stakeholders to ensure joint qualification requirements are sensible and enhance an officer's perspective, knowledge, and ability to lead joint, interagency, and multinational operations that support national strategic goals and objectives.

**81. What additional modifications, if any, would you recommend to JQO prerequisites necessary to ensure that military officers are able to attain both meaningful joint and Service-specific leadership experience, as well as adequate professional development?**

The profound and rapidly changing character of war and conflict in the 21st century compels us to constantly evaluate and transform our talent management and leader development practices to maintain our competitive advantage and successfully prepare for the emerging ways of war our Nation could face. If confirmed, I commit to working with the appropriate stakeholders to ensure the development of strategically minded joint warfighters who think critically and can creatively apply military power to inform national strategy, conduct globally integrated operations, and fight under conditions of disruptive change.

**82. What are your ideas for improving the JQO system better to meet the needs of reserve component officers?**

I recognize that the Reserve Components are vital members of our Total Force. As I understand it, the current Joint Qualification System (JQS) is a Total Force system providing the Department a common standard for joint qualifications. This common standard helps dispel the myth that Reserve Component officers are less qualified to work in the joint environment. Ultimately, this Total Force approach improves the Department's ability to perform its mission across the spectrum of operations.

**83. In your view, should the requirement to be a JQO be eliminated as a consideration in selecting officers for promotion and assignment?**

I recognize that the Department needs leaders who think critically and creatively, apply military power to inform national strategy, conduct globally integrated operations, and fight under conditions of disruptive change. It is my understanding that this is the basis of the JQO requirements. If confirmed, I will work with the Joint Staff and the Service Chiefs to ensure our JQO requirements continue to support that goal.

**Professional Military Education**

**84. What changes or reform would you recommend to the professional military education system to ensure that tomorrow's leaders have the tools necessary to ensure the Department is able to meet the national defense objectives of the future?**

Military education provides the foundation for ensuring that military leaders possess the professionalism, independence of action, and intellectual agility to meet the challenges they will face, today and in the future. If confirmed, I would review and assess the state of the professional military education system and ongoing initiatives to improve the Department's ability to develop the military and civilian leaders needed across all grades to meet its national defense objectives. To ensure our leaders are getting the most from the military education system, I would ensure our processes include robust assessment and evaluation to support continuous improvement of our people and the education system itself.

### **Nuclear Forces**

**85. If confirmed, what would be your role in ensuring that the military services sustain efforts to improve the training, readiness, morale, welfare, and quality of life of service members charged to execute and support the Department's nuclear mission?**

The nuclear deterrence mission is one of the Department's highest priorities, and supporting the Service members that carry out that mission. If confirmed, I will engage the Department of the Navy and the Air Force to understand the specific challenges their nuclear forces face, and work with them to ensure that their Service members are trained, ready, and supported to execute this most critical mission.

### **Space Force**

**86. In your view, how should the reserve components be structured to support to the U.S. Space Force?**

The Reserve Component is a critical part of space operations and provides unmatched strategic depth and technical expertise. If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Department of the Air Force to ensure the proposed organizational design is flexible, innovative and optimized to attract, recruit, and retain the best talent

### **Military Compensation**

**87. Do you agree that the primary purpose of a competitive military pay and benefits package is to recruit and retain a military of sufficient size and quality to meet national defense objectives?**

Yes. The military pay and benefits package must remain competitive with the private sector in order to successfully recruit and retain the right number of high-quality men and women the nation needs for its military.

**88. What is your assessment of the adequacy of the current military pay package in achieving this goal?**

I understand the current military compensation package is robust and compares favorably with the private sector. If confirmed, I will continue to evaluate the adequacy of military pay and benefits to ensure we are attracting and retaining the best of our country's talent for the nation's Armed Forces.

**89. What changes, if any, would you recommend to the current military pay and benefits package, if confirmed?**

At this time, I do not have any specific recommended revisions to military pay and benefits package. However, I am open to considering alternatives, and if confirmed, will work with the Congress on potential changes that do not jeopardize our readiness or ability to recruit, retain, and sustain our nation's All-Volunteer Force.

**90. What specific recommendations do you have for controlling rising military personnel costs, including entitlement spending?**

I have become aware of concerns regarding recent growth in military personnel costs, and I fully support controlling those costs. I do believe we should always seek to improve processes and look for greater efficiencies in order to control costs. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Defense Committees to ensure any future military pay and benefits changes are ones that enhance our ability to sustain the All-Volunteer Force, and are also cost-efficient.

**End Strength and Personnel Requirements**

**91. In your judgment, what role should the USD(P&R) play in ensuring responsible management of military manpower across both the active and reserve components?**

If I confirmed, I believe I will have a fundamental role to play, given both the title 10 and principal staff assistant responsibilities of the USD(P&R). While the management of military manpower is clearly a Military Department responsibility, I believe the USD(P&R) has an inherent responsibility to critically assess the mix of active and reserve capabilities, ensuring that they are sufficiently balanced to meet operational mission demands, maintain a sustainable readiness posture that is responsive to the President's and Secretary's operational planning needs, and promote a flexible and adaptive structure that is cost informed and ensures the long-term viability of our All-Volunteer Force.

**92. Is the current military end strength sufficient to meet national defense objectives? If not, what end strength is necessary?**

At this time, I do not have sufficient information on the Department's operational plans or wartime planning requirements to provide an assessment on the sufficiency of current military end-strength. If confirmed, I will support the Secretary of Defense in working with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Combatant Commanders, the Military Departments, and my counterparts across OSD, given my responsibilities as the primary

advisor to the Secretary on personnel and readiness matters, to inform future deliberations on size and composition of our military force levels and make recommendations on end-strength levels in light of operational demands, risk mitigation, cost considerations, our near- and long-term readiness posture, and the global security environment.

### **Military Accessions Vital to National Interest Program**

**93. In your view, did the benefits of the past Military Accessions Vital to National Interest Program (MAVNI)—recruiting and utilizing those with critical skills vital to the national interest—outweigh the costs to the Department associated with conducting security, suitability, and reliability screenings of applicants?**

It is my understanding that the MAVNI program principally provided the Services with medical personnel and speakers of critical languages. If confirmed, I will look into what worked and what did not with the MAVNI program. I also understand Congress passed legislation in recent years that severely restricts the establishment of such a program.

**94. In your view, how effective was that program in filling certain hard-to-fill specialties?**

I have not had access to the information that would allow me to render an informed opinion on the effectiveness of this program when it was operational. If confirmed, I will acquaint myself with the historical records and analyses of this program, so I can be better informed.

**95. If confirmed, would you recommend reactivating the MAVNI program and authorize the enlistment of new applicants? Please explain your answer.**

If confirmed, I work to learn the complete history of the MAVNI program and evaluate how the Department can effectively and efficiently fill critical hard-to-fill specialties, which further strengthen and diversify the Force. However, I understand it would be extremely difficult to restart the program in its previous form based on legislation enacted by Congress in recent years.

### **Recruiting and Retention**

**96. In your view, what are the main reasons that less than 30 percent of 17–24-year-olds are eligible for military service, and how would you propose increasing the size of that pool?**

It is my understanding that there are many reasons why today's youth are ineligible for military service: medical issues, obesity, drug usage and criminal incidences. I am also aware that the low qualification rates are a national concern, not just for the DoD but for all of America. If confirmed, I will work with Congress to develop means to address these issues with America's youth for the betterment of the country as a whole, as well as the DoD. I will ensure the Department and the Military Services work to correct any misperceptions regarding service in the military and provide a consistent, positive

message to today's youth that increases the desirability of joining the military. Raising propensity – or the interest in serving – among American youth will be important.

**97. Similarly, why do you believe that the propensity of youth to serve continues to drop and is at its lowest level (about 10 percent of all youth, according to DOD data) in years?**

I understand the low propensity to serve is due to the ever-increasing disconnect between civilians and the military and the decreasing Veteran population. If confirmed, I will continue to work on these issues with a focus of shifting the views and esteem of serving in the military.

**98. Do you believe that non-native English speakers are disadvantaged in qualifying for military service by the current testing process? Please explain your answer.**

I understand that the Military Services have historically used and continue to use recruiting programs which provide service opportunities to a wide population of American youth, to include non-native English speakers. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Military Services to ensure the testing process assesses critical skills necessary for success in service and review opportunities to further expand enlistment options for all qualified applicants.

**99. How would you address any such disadvantages to increase the pool of eligible and interested youth?**

I believe the qualification standards have been set to ensure our military force remains unmatched in the world and to ensure the individuals who join can meet the high standards and demands of the military. If confirmed, I am committed to continually reviewing the military accession standards to ensure they remain relevant and in the best interest of the Service and future Service members.

**100. In your view, should existing medical and other qualification standards be reconsidered to accommodate youth willing to enlist for service in certain high-demand specialties, such as remotely piloted aircraft pilots or the cyber workforce?**

It is my understanding that the Military Services have the latitude to approve waivers for certain qualification standards, which enables them to increase the pool of individuals they consider for military service. That being said, I believe that the Department must set standards that maintain military readiness of the force, as we do not know what emerging requirements may occur in the future. If confirmed, I am committed to continually reviewing the military accession standards to ensure they remain relevant and in the best interest of the Service and future Service members.

**101. The recently revised DOD Instruction 6130.03 Volume 1, *Medical Standards for Military Service: Appointment, Enlistment, or Induction*, provides that a “history of**

**cross-sex hormone therapy associated with gender transition is disqualifying unless the individual has been stable on such hormones for 18 months . . .,”**

My understanding regarding the newly published policy is that an applicant is considered to be stable if a licensed mental health provider states the applicant has been without distress in their social, occupational, and other important areas of functioning in their lives for 18 months.

**102. What recognized independent medical authority recommends 18 months as an appropriate timeframe to assess a patient’s “stability” on cross-sex hormones?**

If confirmed, I will make it a priority to understand the recommendations of the different recognized medical authorities regarding the appropriate timeframe required to determine if a patient can be considered stable when treated with cross-sex hormones.

**103. What criteria would a licensed medical provider use to make a determination that a potential service member is “stable” on cross-sex hormones?**

If confirmed, I will work with the military clinical communities to understand their criteria for making a determination that a potential Service member is stable on hormone therapy. I am confident that Department health leadership will support efforts to evaluate their requirements to ensure potential Service members are without clinically significant distress or impairment associated with living in their self-identified gender that may adversely impact their ability to meet military service obligations.

### **Reserve Components**

**104. In your judgment, what has been the effect of increased operational tempo on reserve component recruiting and retention?**

It is my understanding that the Reserve Components continue to meet the nation’s call supporting operations both stateside and overseas. However, I also realize that sustained increased operational tempo does have an effect on retention. If confirmed, I will work with the Military Services to ensure they have the tools necessary to effectively recruit and retain personnel and meet end strength goals in support of national security objectives.

**105. In your view, do the reserve components serve as an operational reserve, a strategic reserve, or both? In light of your answer, should the reserve components be supported by increased training, improved equipment, and higher levels of overall resourcing for readiness?**

In my view, current policy dictates managing the Reserve Components as an operational force with strategic depth. As an operational force, the Reserve Components have successfully performed across the full spectrum of conflict, providing operational capabilities while simultaneously ensuring strategic depth to meet National Defense

Strategy requirements. The Reserve Components must man, equip, sustain, and train their units to successfully accomplish their wide-ranging mission set and meet the requirements of the National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I will work with the Services to ensure that they are resourced to meet their total force requirements.

### **Military Lending Act**

**106. What is your view of the efficacy of the Military Lending Act (MLA)? If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to ensure the act is fully implemented and enforced?**

As a former Naval officer, I understand the impact financial struggles can have on Service members and their ability to focus on the mission. I believe the MLA is critical to protecting Service members and families from lenders that aggressively target our military. If confirmed, I will take the necessary steps to ensure the Act is implemented in a manner that most effectively protects our Service members and their families.

### **Military Quality of Life**

**107. If confirmed, what quality of life and morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) programs would you consider to be a priority?**

Quality of life programs, especially those that promote the well-being and resilience of Service members and their families, are a priority for me. If confirmed, I commit to supporting important programs such as family life counseling; spouse education and employment support; fitness opportunities; MWR and resale; and high quality child care. These programs support and enhance military family readiness, and ultimately mission readiness.

**108. What metric would you apply in determining which MWR and quality of life programs should be sustained or enriched and which should be eliminated or reduced in scope as ineffective or outmoded?**

If confirmed, I am committed to fully evaluating metrics and measures for key MWR and quality of life programs. My understanding is that these programs foster physical and mental well-being, aid in readiness, recruitment, and retention of personnel and are a key part of maintaining Total Force fitness. If confirmed, I will review MWR programs and funding policies to ensure they meet Service member and their family's needs are adequately funded, and provide the Services the flexibility to provide the MWR programs to meet their missions.

### **Military Family Readiness and Support**

**109. What do you consider to be the most important family readiness issues for service members and their families?**

If confirmed, I am committed to learning more about the issues that most impact military family readiness. I understand child care and spouse employment are two issues that come up frequently, and are some of the most important family readiness issues for service members and their families. Spouse unemployment can impact the financial readiness of the family as well as family satisfaction with military life. Ultimately, spouse unemployment can negatively impact retention. If confirmed, I will thoroughly examine these important issues.

**110. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to ensure that military families are provided with accessible, high-quality childcare, at an appropriate cost?**

I believe child care is a critical mission readiness issue and an important contributor to the economic viability of military families. If confirmed, I will be committed to ensuring affordable, quality care is accessible to our military families and determining where the gaps and challenges are in providing this vital service, filling those gaps, and meeting those challenges.

**Support for Military Families with Special Needs**

**111. What is your view of the overall effectiveness of the exceptional family member program (EFMP)?**

Although I do not have enough information at this time to adequately comment on the overall effectiveness of the program, if confirmed, I will be committed to providing support to military families who have family members with exceptional needs. I will work to better understand how the Department is meeting the needs of these important members of our military community.

**112. If confirmed, how would you incentivize service member enrollment in EFMP?**

If confirmed, I will work with the Military Departments to better understand how they currently incentivize members to enroll in EFMP and explore additional avenues to encourage enrollment.

**113. If confirmed, how would you enhance support to a service member in navigating the TRICARE system to obtain the medical services and support required by a family member with special needs, regardless of where that family member is located?**

Developing an efficient process to assist families in gaining access to medical services and support is a priority. If confirmed, I will work with the necessary stakeholders to ensure the implementation of processes to assist families in accessing required medical services in a timely and effective manner.

**114. If confirmed, how would work with Military Housing Privatization Initiative partners and military commanders to ensure that the needs of service members with**



**an exceptional family member are considered in the military housing assignment process?**

Ensuring our EFMP families have access to housing that meets their needs is important. If confirmed, I will review existing procedures and policies to better understand how access to housing is addressed in the EFMP program and work with appropriate DoD officials to make any needed improvements.

**115. If confirmed, how would you prioritize the implementation of section 582 of the NDAA for FY 2021, which mandates improvements and standardization of the EFMP across the Department?**

If confirmed, I will make providing support to our EFMP families a priority and ensure the Department complies with all applicable laws, including section 582 of the NDAA for FY 2021.

### **Commissary and Military Exchange Systems**

**116. What is your view of proposals to consolidate the commissaries and the Service Exchanges into a single defense resale system?**

It is my understanding that the Department is currently conducting a Business Case Analysis on the feasibility of consolidating defense resale entities as required by the section 633 of the NDAA for FY21.

I believe it would be premature for me to form an opinion on this question without seeing the results of the study. If confirmed, I will review the report closely and ensure that an impact and risk assessment for any partial or full consolidation has been thoroughly considered before any decisions are made.

**117. What is your view of the value that accrues to commissary patrons by including beer and wine among the products offered on commissary shelves?**

It is my understanding that a pilot program to assess the value of beer and wine in commissaries is ongoing. If confirmed, I will review the results of the pilot and further assess the convenience value to the Department's commissary patrons.

**118. What steps have been taken to prepare the commissary to transition to a non-appropriated fund personnel system?**

It is my understanding that this issue is on hold pending further evaluation of the updated study required by section 633 of the NDAA for FY2021. If confirmed, I will review the results of the study and conduct a thorough assessment before any decision is made to transition the commissary system to a non-appropriated fund personnel system.

**119. Have initiatives designed to enhance the commissary's ability to operate more like a private sector grocery store been effective in reducing commissary reliance on appropriated funds?**

It is my understanding that the ability to operate like a private sector grocery store should reduce DeCA's reliance on Service allocated appropriated fund dollars. If confirmed, I will assess and support efforts to balance better delivery of the commissary benefit with funding sources in accordance with the Defense Planning Guidance and legal authorities.

**120. What is your view of proposals to privatize the commissary system?**

I believe that commissaries are an important military non-pay compensation benefit, and should be retained within the Department of Defense to ensure that the benefit is maintained for commissary patrons. It is my understanding that the commissaries demonstrated this critical importance throughout the pandemic.

**Department of Defense Civilian Workforce Matters**

**121. How would you describe the current state of the Department's civilian workforce, including its morale and the Department's ability to successfully recruit and retain top civilian talent?**

I am not completely familiar with the existing state of the morale of the Department's civilian workforce and its ability to successfully recruit top civilian talent. If confirmed, one of my priorities will be to work with senior leaders to assess these areas and implement strategies to address Departmental needs, as appropriate.

**122. In your judgment, what are the biggest challenges facing the DOD in effectively and efficiently managing its civilian workforce?**

I believe the biggest challenges may be the recruitment and retention of technical and other specialized civilian talent to meet national security needs. If confirmed, I will assess the workforce to identify the Department's greatest challenges and implement strategies to address them.

**123. In your view, what are the benefits and detriments to the use of borrowed military manpower?**

I believe the primary benefit of borrowed military manpower is the flexibility it gives the Military Services in ensuring their missions are successfully executed. I believe it is critical the Services have the ability to meet their needs without overly rigid restrictions on their personnel. The primary detriment to borrowed military manpower is overreliance on it to fill gaps. While the Services should have the flexibility they need, it should not come at the expense of operational readiness.

**124. Would there be any value to the Department, in your view, in eliminating the moratorium on the use of A-76 public/private competitions that has been in effect since 2009?**

While I am not yet very familiar with the A-76 process or the history behind the moratorium, I believe that inhibiting or limiting the Secretary's, or any leader's, flexibility to make well-reasoned and informed choices in meeting mission requirements results in sub-optimal outcomes for the Department. However, I understand the A-76 process is considered flawed by both the public and private sectors. If confirmed, I would work with my counterparts in the Department, and with the Congress, to ensure we have the appropriate authorities and flexibilities needed to achieve the best outcomes possible for the Department, both in terms of mission success and resource allocation.

**125. In your view, and particularly in the post-COVID period, how can DOD and its Components better utilize telework, while maintaining supervisory and employee accountability for high quality performance and the appropriate use of official time?**

If confirmed, I will work with senior leadership to ensure that telework and other workforce flexibilities are appropriately utilized and best support supervisors and managers in their management of a high performing workforce.

### **Cyber Workforce**

**126. What is your view of the appropriate mix between the uniformed cyber workforce and civilian employees?**

I do not believe that there is a "one size fits all" solution for the Department's workforce, or any functional workforce. The balance and mix of personnel should be based on mission requirements, the nature of the work, labor cost considerations, and local market conditions. As noted earlier, if confirmed, I will work with my counterparts in the Department to ensure leaders have the right appropriate authorities and flexibilities needed to achieve the best outcomes possible for the Department when it comes to appropriate mix of military and civilian personnel.

**127. In your view, how effective is the Cyber Excepted Service Workforce authority under section 1599f of title 10, United States Code, in helping the Department meet its requirements for a highly qualified and competent cyber workforce?**

If confirmed, I will work with the DoD Chief Information Officer to review the implementation and current execution of the Cyber Excepted Service to ensure that it meets the Department's requirements for recruiting and retaining a highly qualified and competent cyber workforce.

**128. What actions would you take, if confirmed, to mitigate any gaps between cyber workforce capacity and capability?**

I have not seen accounts of gaps between the cyber workforce capacity and capability. If confirmed, I will work with the DoD Chief Information Officer to better understand and develop solutions to mitigate any existing or perceived gaps.

### **Technical Workforce**

**129. In your view, what are the pros and cons of having active-duty military personnel—as opposed to civilian employees—trained and working as scientists, engineers, software coders, and in other technical positions across the DOD research, development, and acquisition enterprise?**

As the nature of warfare changes, and we are increasingly reliant on technology, data, and innovation in maintaining our competitive edge and in our warfighting domains, I believe that having active-duty military personnel in science and engineering positions is absolutely necessary. At the same time, we need to ensure we can attract and retain this talent in the uniformed force, and maintain constant levels of currency in very dynamic and constantly changing fields. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts across OSD and the Military Departments to assess how our Service members are being utilized in these technical positions, not only our active-duty members but also considering how we can harness the talent of our Reserve Component personnel, and balance that with civilian workforce needs.

**130. If confirmed, how would you ensure that the directors of national labs under the purview of DOD have the civilian workforce management tools they need to shape their science, technology, and engineering workforces?**

If confirmed, I will consult with appropriate senior leaders to assess Departmental needs in managing the science, technology, and engineering workforces and provide policy solutions, if necessary, to ensure the Department is equipped to effectively manage these specialized workforces.

### **Senior Executive Service**

**131. Given that competent and caring leadership is one of the most significant factors in shaping a high-performing DOD civilian workforce, if confirmed, what factors and characteristics would be most important to you in selecting candidates for appointment to the Senior Executive Service?**

Individuals selected for the Senior Executive Service must be exceptional leaders with the ability to lead large, dynamic, and complex organizations. If confirmed, I will ensure that the guiding competencies of the Department's leadership propagate a people and mission focused culture, while mentoring the next generation of dedicated public servants.

**132. If confirmed, how would you ensure that SES under your authority are held accountable for both organizational performance and the rigorous performance management of their subordinate employees?**

It is my understanding that the National Defense Strategy provides DoD with the goals, objectives, and strategies required for mission success. If confirmed, I will ensure leaders are held accountable for achieving the National Defense Strategy goals. Furthermore, I will utilize the Department's performance management system to align executive performance with the Department's strategic guidance and ensure executives under my authority are assessed on the quality of their leadership as much as the results they produce.

**133. Are you satisfied with the subject matter and rigor of SES professional development programs currently available across DOD? If not, what changes would you make to these programs, if confirmed?**

As I am not familiar with any current executive development initiatives or programs in the Department. However, if confirmed, I will work with the appropriate offices to review available programs and prescribe policy or programmatic changes, as appropriate, to ensure consistent availability across the Department.

### **Congressional Oversight**

**134. In order to exercise legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress receive timely testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch.**

**Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.**

Yes.

**Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to provide this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information, as may be requested of you, and to do so in a timely manner? Please answer with a simple yes or no.**

Yes.

**Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to consult with this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? Please answer with a simple yes or no.**

Yes.

**Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to keep this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? Please answer with a simple yes or no.**

Yes.

**Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Please answer with a simple yes or no.**

Yes.

**Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this committee? Please answer with a simple yes or no.**

Yes.

**Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.**

Yes.