

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
PRESENTATION TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
UNITED STATES SENATE

SUBJECT: OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AND THE DEFENSE OFFICER  
PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT ACT OF 1980

STATEMENT OF:

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UNITED STATES SENATE

Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee to testify on the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) of 1980. America's Airmen remain "Always There" providing Global Vigilance, Global Reach and Global Power to protect and defend our Nation. Congress has been a valued partner the past 70 years providing important legislative provisions, such as DOPMA and the Reserve Officer Personnel Management Act (ROPMA), to provide structure and predictability for our officer corps. The Air Force appreciates the tremendous support we have received from this committee and looks forward to partnering with you to modernize DOPMA that will keep it relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

We believe DOPMA has achieved its intended goals to standardize the management of our officer corps by establishing officer career lengths, driving centralized promotion boards, and directing consistent promotion selection opportunity from year to year. These foundational elements have been essential to building today's Air Force. As we look to the future, we believe it is time to continue leveraging the stability and predictability that DOMPA provides but also to modernize. This modernization will provide more flexibility into the officer management system so we can quickly respond to human capital requirements in the information age.

We know that in order for the Air Force to meet to the demands of tomorrow, we need to be able to compete for, commission, and retain the best and brightest leaders from across our Nation. As the labor market becomes increasingly more competitive, attracting and keeping the bright leaders may require additional flexibilities in our personnel management governance. We also know officers serving today desire more agility and ability to manage their careers than DOPMA currently affords. Therefore, the Air Force is considering legislative changes to

modernize DOPMA to more effectively recruit, access, and retain the high caliber officers needed to sustain our Air Force today and position us for the future.

The Air Force is reviewing proposed statutory changes for the FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act to modernize DOPMA and ROPMA to recruit, develop, promote and retain officers for today's operational requirements. Once we have completed our review and obtained approval of our proposed changes not just within the Department, but also by the Administration, we will share these proposals with you and provide you with more details. Today's threat environment and emerging missions require an agile, responsive officer personnel management system to ensure we continue to attract and retain the talent we need to defend the Nation.

Your Air Force is eager to modernize promotion processes and systems! In 2015, we transformed our enlisted evaluation and promotion processes with much success. Air Force enlisted promotions are now more closely tied to job performance and less to factors such as time in grade or time in service. This change enables outstanding enlisted Airmen to be promoted more rapidly than under the previous system. Building on the successes achieved in the enlisted processes, in 2017, we initiated a similar endeavor for our officer performance management system. This initiative includes a thorough, deliberate review of our officer performance evaluation and officer promotion processes. We have a dedicated team exploring various officer evaluation and promotion considerations which include starting at the foundation with thoughtful work focused on what the Air Force values in its officer corps. Building on that sturdy foundation, we are actively looking into increasing the number of competitive categories, creating a technical track and establishing static promotion board dates, to share a few examples. We have a draft Concept of Operations with a four-phased approach to modernization which is currently being evaluated by senior Air Force leadership.

We are looking into what we can do to enhance the Air Force's ability to execute the right size and mix of capabilities required to meet and sustain emerging mission demands in today's rapidly changing and competitive environment. While we have the overall authority for maintaining field grade officers at the approved proportion of the force, we are challenged in managing certain stressed career fields such as pilots, cyber, special operations, intelligence, contracting, and select health professionals. Exit surveys conducted in 2017 informed us that the top three reasons officers are leaving the Air Force include: maintaining a work-life balance, the high potential for time away from their family, and too many permanent change of station moves. The theme we take from those departing officers is their desire for more control, flexibility, and stability in their career timing and advancement.

We understand that we are in a national competition for talent! Your Air Force has become even more technical in nature and as such competes for the nation's highly sought high-tech talent. We appreciate the authority to use constructive credit in accessing cyber professionals into our ranks. We look forward to exploring a multitude of options for strengthening our recruiting efforts in competing for this outside talent! Accessing and appropriately compensating this highly sought after group of technical leaders will ensure the Air Force's continued success into the future.

Now more than ever, it is critical to remove barriers for officers transitioning from the active component to the Reserve Component. Currently this process can take several months, and results in many talented Officers sitting on the sideline or taking advantage of other opportunities away from the Air Force due to a more seamless transition. It is mutually advantageous to both the Air Force and the individual to accelerate the transition into the

Reserve Component, as it ultimately keeps highly skilled Airmen in the Air Force. We will continue our internal efforts to accelerate this process.

In closing, we greatly appreciate this committee's continuing support of the Air Force and the interest in discussing DOPMA modernization. This is a timely and welcomed dialogue as we continue our review of officer performance management processes within the Air Force. We look forward to collaborating with the Department of Defense, our Sister Services, and Congress to determine what changes may be needed to DOPMA and ROPMA to keep them relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We want the Air Force to be seen as an employer “of choice” to the nation’s best prospects. You can be rest assured your Air Force will remain “Always There” in providing Global Vigilance, Global Reach and Global Power for our nation!