

**HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE
ACTIVE, GUARD, RESERVE, AND CIVILIAN
PERSONNEL PROGRAMS IN REVIEW OF THE
DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR
FISCAL YEAR 2011 AND THE FUTURE YEARS
DEFENSE PROGRAM**

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 2010

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:33 a.m. in room SR-232A, Russell Senate Office Building, Senator Jim Webb (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Webb, Hagan, Begich, Graham, and Chambliss.

Majority staff members present: Jonathan D. Clark, counsel; Gabriella Eisen, counsel; and Gerald J. Leeling, counsel.

Minority staff members present: Diana G. Tabler, professional staff member; and Richard F. Walsh, minority counsel.

Staff assistants present: Jennifer R. Knowles and Brian F. Sebold.

Committee members' assistants present: Juliet Beyler and Gordon Peterson, assistants to Senator Webb, Lindsay Kavanaugh, assistant to Senator Begich; Clyde Taylor IV, assistant to Senator Chambliss; and Adam Brake, assistant to Senator Graham.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JIM WEBB, CHAIRMAN

Senator WEBB. Good morning. The subcommittee will come to order.

The subcommittee meets today to receive testimony on the Active, Guard, Reserve, and civilian personnel programs in review of the National Defense Authorization Request for fiscal year 2011 and the Future Years Defense Program.

We will have two panels today. The first panel's witnesses are the senior civilian officials in the Department of Defense and the military departments who are responsible for personnel matters. I welcome The Honorable Clifford Stanley, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness; The Honorable Thomas Lamont, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; The Honorable Juan Garcia, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; and The Honorable Dan-

iel Ginsberg, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

Nobody wants to sit in this center seat, here? [Laughter.]

Mr. Stanley, feel free to be the major focal point of the room. [Laughter.]

Our second panel will include witnesses drawn from associations that represent and advance the interests of Active Duty, Reserve, and retired servicemembers and their families. I'll introduce our second panel when it convenes, but I wish to express my appreciation to all our witnesses for joining us this morning.

This is my first hearing as chairman of this subcommittee. The subcommittee's jurisdiction extends to virtually all matters of personnel policy—compensation, military healthcare, military nominations, civilian personnel. And I'd like to say, at this point, that I intend for this subcommittee to exercise continuous and active oversight of all our military personnel matters, through hearings, through consideration of the Department's budget and legislative proposals, and also through day-to-day interaction with you and people who work with you, and with our committee staff, as well. And this hearing is one part, and one part only, of that process.

There's no greater responsibility for Congress and military leaders, as our witnesses all know, than to care and provide for our servicemembers and for their families. And this is a concept of stewardship that I, and I think all of my compatriots up here, feel about very strongly.

I grew up in the military, as many of you know. I know what it's like to have a parent deployed. I also know what that means, in terms of the responsibilities and the challenges of family members. I can remember, at one point, when—my father was career Air Force—I went to a different school in the fifth grade, sixth grade, seventh grade, three different schools in the eighth grade, the ninth grade, two different schools in the tenth grade, from England to Missouri to Texas to Alabama to California to Nebraska, and I know how that stresses the families, and I know how important it is for us to always keep that in mind.

I had the honor of serving with the Marine Corps infantry in Vietnam. I understand a lot of the stresses of what it means to be deployed in combat. I'm a father of a Marine NCO who had some hard time in Iraq, and also the father-in-law of a Marine infantry sergeant, who is now, at the age of 24, looking to be deployed for the fourth time, coming this July.

So, that, coupled with the experience that I was able to gain through 5 years in the Pentagon—one as a Marine officer, three having responsibility for our Guard and Reserve programs, about which I feel very strongly, and the other as Secretary of the Navy—we got a very good look, in the 1980s, at the evolution of the total-force concept, where the manpower challenges came from, force-structure issues, and those sorts of things, and they will come to play here, in this subcommittee, as we move forward.

So, we're very cognizant of the fact the Department of Defense, supported by this committee, has instituted many innovative programs over the past several years in order to deal with the challenges that have occurred since 9/11.

I would mention, briefly, since this is my first hearing as chairman of this subcommittee, that the Commonwealth of Virginia has a long history, in terms of taking care of, and being host to, one of the largest Active Duty and retired military populations in our country, and I'm honored to serve in the tradition of John Warner, who is no longer in the Senate, but gave tremendous service to this committee and also to the people of Virginia, in that—in this area.

So, our military is now engaged in its 9th year of combat operations since 9/11. Our Guard and Reserve components have played critical roles during this period, in ways that were not envisioned at the inception of the All-Volunteer Force and, quite frankly, were not envisioned when I was Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

It's also important for us to remember that the All-Volunteer Force is not an all-career force. Sometimes we lose that focus when we have people from the Pentagon coming over here talking to us about programs. The services do a very fine job of attending to the needs of its career force, but we should always keep in mind our stewardship to those who feel, in the citizen-soldier tradition of this country, that they should come in and obligate themselves for one enlistment, and return to their communities.

The data that we received when we were formulating the GI Bill was that 75 percent of the Army, enlisted folks in the Army, and 70 percent of the Marine Corps, and roughly half of the other two services, leave the military on or before the end of their first enlistment. Those numbers may have varied a bit with the economic conditions right now, but those are the people that we should never forget when we come up—in talking about these other programs.

I'm look forward, greatly, to serving with our subcommittee's ranking member, Senator Graham, in addressing these challenges, and to ensure the long-term viability of the All-Volunteer Force, not simply in numbers, but also in quality. Everyone in this room is very familiar with Senator Graham's service, not only on this committee, but also to our country, continuing to serve as a colonel in the Air Force Reserve. He brings valuable perspective, I think, as everyone has seen, as we've attempted to work through the issues of the Guantanamo Bay detainees and many other areas. He's served regularly on Active Duty, and his duties have allowed him to keep his finger on the pulse of the men and women in our military today. He and I have collaborated on a number of important issues over the past 3 years, and I welcome this opportunity to work with him even more closely during the months and years ahead.

The All-Volunteer Force is stressed by the past 9 years of conflict. Having experienced multiple deployments, extended deployments to Afghanistan, Iraq, this is especially true of our ground forces. We're entering uncharted territory, in terms of the long-term consequences of past rotation cycles and an unsatisfactory deployment-to-dwell ratio that is only now beginning to be corrected. Despite authorizing more than 55,000 additional Active-Duty servicemembers in the last year, today's dwell times are still inadequate to ensuring the vital recuperation, revitalization, and reset of the force and their families. I'm concerned about that impact on

the resilience of the force, and we'll have some questions, during your testimony, with respect to those issues.

This subcommittee faces a very clear and immediate challenge, and that is, in addressing the rising costs of personnel. The combination of rising end strengths and an increasing compensation package continues to send personnel-related costs soaring. As Secretary Gates recently said, "The costs of healthcare are eating the Department alive." The total personnel-related budget in the Department's fiscal year 2011 request, including the cost of providing healthcare to servicemembers, their families, and retirees, amounts to \$178 billion, or 32 percent of the overall DOD base budget. By contrast, when I was Secretary of the Navy, I think the entire Navy budget was less than 100 billion—it was right about 100 billion. And the fiscal 2003 total personnel-related spending, including healthcare, amounted to \$114 billion. That's an increase of 56 percent. And by all accounts, that growth is going to continue.

Though these challenges are steep, we should also be thankful for the successes that the Department and our services have enjoyed. The combination of patriotism, a stagnant economy, a robust compensation package, including retirement, healthcare, and education benefits, have allowed the services to achieve historic highs in recruiting and retention.

And the quality of our people has also been sustained. Waivers are down across the services, test scores are up, and the vast majority of new recruits are high school graduates, a higher percentage than just a couple of years ago. These are all strong indicators of the quality of character and service that our people in uniform exhibit, across the board, day after day.

So, I look forward to hearing from both panels this morning. I would encourage you to express your views candidly and, in addition to relating to what you see going well, to address your concerns in those issues that you believe this subcommittee needs to pay attention to. And I, along with Senator Graham and our colleagues, are dedicated to the prospect of ensuring that our military remains the very best in the world.

Senator Graham?

STATEMENT OF SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As I listened to your opening statement, it really struck me that, of all of the people in the Senate, you're clearly, I think, the most qualified person to lead this committee right now, in the sense of your understanding the personnel issues and just your personal history.

So, I want to also acknowledge that Senator Nelson was a complete joy to work with, and he's gone to another subcommittee. But, Mr. Chairman, I promise, when it comes to the troops, we'll be as bipartisan as possible. And I think we've proven, between the two of us, that we can disagree, but also find common ground on things that really do matter.

I was on a plane not long ago, and on that one plane I had a young man come up to me who had just gotten out of the military, he's going to Harvard, and he mentioned the VA bill that you authored and we worked together to pass. And it really is working.

There's a lot of implementation problems, but the fact that this young man is able to get most of his college education paid for, if not all, for serving 4 years, going to Harvard, I think, is a testament to that bill. And there was a—the guy sitting right by me was a 28-year-old—28-year service Air Force colonel who is going to transfer his benefits to his youngest daughter going to college, and he was just telling me how much that meant to his family. So, what we're able to accomplish there, with your leadership, is really helping people.

On this subcommittee, we—the one thing I would suggest is, the President's budget—I'm going to try to support as much as possible. The 1.4-percent pay raise is the least we can do. We all wish it would be more, but we do have budget problems up here. The sustainability of healthcare is the issue, I think, for us on this committee, and maybe the Congress as a whole, because, as you talked about your time in Navy, the budgets have grown, the obligations are great, so few people are doing so much for so long. And here we are, 9 years, almost, into this war, and we're growing the military. And I think that's a wise thing to do. Personnel costs are 30-something percent of the budget, but the healthcare component is 8 percent of the budget, growing, you know—it's going to be hard to sustain that. We haven't had a premium increase in TRICARE since 1995. And I want to do everything I can to help the families and retirees and military members, but eventually we're going to have to deal with that problem: How do you sustain the growth of TRICARE and other medical benefits within the budget before you start taking away from the warfighter? And that means some hard decisions are to come.

When it comes to “Don't Ask, Don't Tell,” I think we all are waiting to see what this survey shows, and try to make an intelligent decision based on input from the military, and I would just urge my colleagues to let that run its course.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will listen to the witnesses and look forward to working with you. Again, I think, between the two of us and the members of this committee, we can do some good things for our men and women in uniform.

And one last thought. Senator Chambliss has a bill that I've been working with to lower retirement age for Guard and Reserve members who will be—who have served on Active Duty since September 11, 2001. For every year they would serve, or 90 days they would serve, they could retire a bit earlier, all the way down to 55. That has a cost associated with, but I think it's an idea whose time has come, and I look forward to working with you to see if we can make that possible.

But, Mr. Chairman, look forward to being your ally and colleague on this. And now is the time for me to shut up and let the people who are in charge talk.

[The prepared statement of Senator Graham follows:]

[SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator WEBB. Let me say that I can't think of a better person to be working with than Senator Graham on these issues, as well. Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Senator WEBB. So, we've received statements for the record from the Fleet Reserve Association, the Reserve Officer Association, and, without objection they will be included in the record at this point. [The information referred to follows:]

Senator WEBB. We've also received a statement for the record from Senator Bill Nelson, who could not be here, and, without objection, that will be included in the record after the principal statements of our witnesses.

And, with that, we would begin with Dr. Stanley, and then move to Mr. Lamont, Mr. Garcia, and Mr. Ginsberg, in that order.

So, Dr. Stanley, Under Secretary Stanley, General Stanley, welcome.

STATEMENT OF HON. CLIFFORD L. STANLEY, UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS

Mr. STANLEY. Good morning, Senator Webb and Senator Graham and other distinguished members.

First of all, let me just say I'm honored to be here, and particularly with colleagues and, in some cases, just meeting today.

I'm—as I speak to you concerning the Department of Defense's personnel programs and readiness, for the past 3 weeks, as the Under Secretary of Defense, I've had the honor of working and interacting with some of the greatest men and women in uniform, Department of Defense civilians, contractors, and their great families. It is truly a privilege to serve them in this position.

I first want to thank you for your support of these men and women over the years. They have fought our wars, protected our interests and our allies around the globe. I look forward to working closely with this committee to improve support for those in uniform, the civilian employees of the Department, and their families.

Just a few short months ago, I appeared before you as President Obama's nominee to be the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. At that time, I emphasized several top priorities: the All-Volunteer Force, support to wounded warriors, personnel readiness, family programs, and the stress that is affecting our military today.

In terms of military personnel, the services are experiencing historic success in recruiting and retention. It is a tribute to both the dedication of our military personnel and to the patriotism of our Nation's citizens that we continue to maintain an All-Volunteer Force of unprecedented quality after more than 8 years in active combat operations.

I am happy to report that in fiscal year 2009 the services have had the most successful recruiting year of all the All-Volunteer Force era. All four Active services and all six elements of the Reserve component achieved both numerical and recruit quality targets for the first time, which is a banner year. To continue to secure sufficient personnel for the Armed Forces, the Department must provide a compensation package comparable and competitive to the private sector at the same time we balance the demands of an All-Volunteer Force in the context of growing equipment and operational costs.

The Department continues this commitment through the President's request for a 1.4-percent increase in military pay for all

servicemembers in the fiscal year 2011 budget, an amount that equals earning increases in the private sector, as measured by the Employment Cost Index. Of note, from the January 1, 2002, through the January 1, 2010, pay raises, military pay rose about 24—20—42 percent, and the housing allowance rose by 83 percent. During the same period, private-sector wages and salaries rose only 32 percent.

While there is little question that those increases were necessary in the past, rising personnel costs could dramatically affect the readiness of the Department. We are at a point where discretionary spending offers the best ability to target specific skills, and the quality and quantity of those filling such positions. I believe the services still require the use of special pay and bonuses to ensure sufficient operational readiness and our mission.

Our military forces maintain an exceptionally high level of readiness, but multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan have certainly increased the stress on our servicemembers and their families. And we have had—or we have a number of initiatives underway to address this stress, and have set clear limits and goals for the deployment lengths and the amount of time, or “dwell,” between deployments.

To that end, we have limited our unit deployments to 1 year in theater, a minimum of 1 year between deployments for our Active component. Our goal is to increase the time between deployments to 2 years for every year deployed, commonly called a 1-to-12 dwell ratio. For the Reserve component, we have limited the mobilization period to 1 year, and we strive to have a minimum 3-year break between mobilizations. The goal of the Reserve-component dwell ratio is 1 year mobilized, with a 5-year break between mobilizations, or a 1-to-5 dwell ratio. Although we are not there yet, we are making progress toward those goals.

The Department is focused on care for our wounded, ill, and injured military members. As Secretary Gates stated last month, aside from winning the wars themselves, this is the Department’s highest priority. Initiatives are currently underway to achieve a seamless transition from Active Duty to veteran status, and to increase cooperation between the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. In addition, efforts to create a Disability Evaluation System that is simpler, faster, fairer, and more consistent are underway.

Finally, in support of President Obama’s commitment, the Department is partnering with the VA to establish Virtual Lifetime Electronic Records that will improve veteran care and services through increased availability and administrative and health information.

We are also committed to further improving support to our military families. For fiscal year ’11, we have requested for a 41-percent increase in family assistance baseline funding across the Department to ensure that we are on target, in the sense of investing in programs that are needed by servicemembers and their families. We have initiated an extensive strategic planning process to address the current issues facing family readiness programs. This begins with a thorough assessment of existing needs, programs, and related issues.

Unfortunately, we have had stumbles in this area. As I'm sure you're aware, we announced a temporary pause to the My Career Advancement Account, that's MyCAA, program on February 16, 2010. Due to unforeseen, unprecedented, but welcome, demand in enrollments that overwhelmed the infrastructure, we nearly reached the budget threshold. While it was necessary to pause the program immediately, we failed to communicate properly the reasons for the pause. Over the past few weeks, the Department of Defense has worked tirelessly on mapping out solutions, for both the short and long term, that honors our commitment to our military spouses while accounting for fiscal realities.

Our proposals are in the final stage of approval and we hope to restart the program very soon. We know we must make a concerted effort to restore our credibility and confidence with our military spouses, servicemembers, and the American public.

Our military has proven its resilience during the most challenging of times, but the stress on the force is obvious. The Department's civilian and military leadership remain focused on employing numerous strategies to reduce the incidence of suicide in the Armed Forces. In calendar year 2009, there were a total of 312 suicides, 285 Active component and 26 in the Reserve component, marking an increase, up from 268 in 2008. I know this committee shares our belief that even one suicide is too many.

There are many other critical issues facing the Department and this Nation, and I am exceedingly grateful to this Congress and this committee for their continuous commitment to supporting our men and women in the Department of Defense.

I look forward to your questions and thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Stanley follows:]

Senator WEBB. Thank you very much, Secretary Stanley.
Secretary Lamont.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. THOMAS R. LAMONT, ASSISTANT
SECRETARY OF THE ARMY FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE
AFFAIRS**

Mr. LAMONT. Chairman Webb, Senator Graham, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I appear before you on behalf of 1.1 million men and women serving here and abroad in peaceful, as well as hostile, environments. This combat-seasoned force is resilient and professional, yet strained and out of balance. More than 1 million of this Nation's finest citizens have deployed, over the past 8 years, into harm's way. We realize, very well, that there are costs associated with this conflict, both visible and invisible.

Our current programs to relieve stress on the force are critical to maintaining a healthy, balanced, and prepared force. These programs help us defend our country against some of the most persistent and wide-ranging threats in our Nation's history. The success of these programs is due, in large part, to the support of Congress—to the support Congress has given us since this Army went to war in 2001.

First and foremost, you have enabled us, through appropriate resources, to meet a temporary end-strength increase for our agile Army. As a result, this will, in part, alleviate the stress and strain on the total Army. This is a step in the right direction to get our personnel structure back in balance.

Congress has also given us the means to improve the quality of life for our soldiers and their families. Soldiers remain in the Army based on the established incentive programs, such as an excellent healthcare system, educational opportunities, financial stability with sufficient bonuses, general vacation time, soldier and family services, and frankly, out of a true sense of duty to our Country. This Congress has embraced our needs, and for that, we are very grateful.

The Army continues to face challenges, which we will encounter today and well into the future. Armed with lessons learned, it is our intent to stay in front of those challenges, anticipate them, develop strategies and programs to address them, and hopefully, keep them from becoming problems in the future.

Specifically, one of the challenges that we are addressing is the concept of the Operational Reserve. The Army's Reserve component continues to transition from a strategic Reserve to an operational force. The Army will require recurrent, assured, and predictable access to the Reserve component to meet operational requirements. This transformation of the Reserve component into an operational force will provide an opportunity for the Army to provide the most cost-effective total force by investing resources in the most cost-efficient portion of the Army's total force.

Our focus this year centers on restoring the balance, resilience, and sustainment of the force, growth in talent, and our ability to meet the Nation's needs with the highest-quality force available. The Army will continue to work hard to attract and retain the best, but we need your help in taking on this larger problem. The challenging environments that our soldier's serve in demand that we maintain the standards as set, and we must remain ever-vigilant that our force is manned with both physically and mentally qualified soldiers, as it is today.

As you are well aware, we have some tough challenges ahead of us. I'm confident, however, that with the operational and institutional agility this Army has developed over the past 9 years, we will meet all the challenges that will come our way. It is always easy to commit to a plan of action when we know that Congress supports us. Your leadership and your support have been unwavering.

I appreciate this opportunity to come before the committee, both now and in the future, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lamont follows:]

Senator WEBB. Thank you very much, Secretary Lamont.
Secretary Garcia.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. JUAN M. GARCIA III, ASSISTANT
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE
AFFAIRS**

Mr. GARCIA. Chairman Webb, Senator Graham, distinguished members of the committee, it's my pleasure to be here today to testify on behalf of our Navy and Marine Corps personnel.

For the past 5 months as an Assistant Secretary of the Navy, I've had the honor of representing and advocating for the nearly 650,000 sailors and marines, both Active Duty and Reserve, and 180,000 civilian employees who, together, are globally engaged across a spectrum of operations ranging from major combat to humanitarian assistance.

Across the Department of the Navy, we are asking our sailors, marines, and civilians to take on extraordinary tasks ranging from combat operations in Afghanistan to unplanned disaster relief in Haiti. The men and women who comprise the Navy and Marine Corps have invariably risen to meet the challenge presented.

Our leadership team—Secretary Mabus, Under Secretary Work, Admiral Roughead, and General Conway—have set a course for the Department of the Navy that drives our human capital strategy, focusing on our greatest asset: our people. In order to achieve our best, we promote an environment in which every person can excel, where each person is treated with dignity and respect, and where all are recognized for the contributions they make.

Both the Navy and Marine Corps are experiencing historic success in recruiting and retention of Active Duty servicemembers. I assess that both services will continue meeting their recruiting and end-strength goals for the foreseeable future. It's a tribute to both the dedication of our military personnel communities and to the patriotism of our Nation's young men and women that we are able to maintain an All-Volunteer Force of unprecedented quality through more than 8 years of combat—of active combat operations.

Recruiting and retention in certain fields—healthcare, Special Forces, nuclear power—continue to pose challenges and will require the use of special pays and bonuses to ensure adequate numbers of qualified personnel are available in those critical specialties.

Despite its high operational tempo, the Marine Corps was able to grow to 202,000 Active Duty end strength 2 years ahead of schedule. This focus on Active Duty recruiting and retention resulted in a slight shortfall of the Marine Reserve component end strength for 2009. For this same reason, 2010 Reserve strength may also be slightly below target.

The health of the Reserve components is of particular concern because of our dependence on them to meet our global obligations. Since September 11, more than 142,000 mobilization requirements have been met by members of the Navy and Marine Corps Reserve.

A high tempo, high stress environment appears to be the new normal for the Department of the Navy. One of the lessons to be learned from recent years is that our people step up and perform superbly in times of greatest need. But, the reality of continuing operations in Afghanistan, combined with our other deployment commitments, undeniably places great stress on our forces. The Department of the Navy is employing every measure available to help

identify consequent risks, and we continue to assess and reevaluate these programs daily.

As Secretary Gates has said, apart from the war itself, we have no higher priority than taking care of the wounded, ill, and injured. Through the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment and the Navy Safe Harbor Program, the sea services strive to provide the best possible support for our personnel struck down, to include reintegration into society and a new emphasis on post-service employment.

I'd like to thank the committee members for their continuous commitment to the support of our expeditionary fighting men and women, especially to those who have returned from the front line of battle with broken bodies but unbroken spirits, our wounded warriors.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Garcia follows:]

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Secretary Garcia.

Secretary GINSBERG.

STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL B. GINSBERG, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

Mr. GINSBERG. Thank you, Chairman Webb, Ranking Member Graham, and members of the subcommittee.

It is my honor to testify before you today about our airmen. They are doing incredible work every day to serve our Nation and accomplish the missions that our Nation has asked of them. Our Air Force has been engaged in continuous operations for over 19 years. We have never been more engaged than today. We have over 38,000 airmen deployed around the world, and thousands more airmen providing direct support to the warfighter through our space systems, global mobility operations, and remotely-piloted operations, to name just a few of the critical capabilities that we provide.

Overall, our force structure is healthy. We are working internal challenges to ensure we meet the increased demand for new and emerging missions, such as our remotely piloted aircraft, cyberoperations, and irregular warfare. We are meeting our total-force recruiting goals, except for a few hard-to-fill specialties in our officer medical specialties.

To address this, we are aggressively pursuing a three-pronged approach to, first, grow our own through expanded scholarship opportunities and commissioning opportunities for our enlisted force; second, increase compensation through special and incentive pays; and third, to improve quality of life.

Although the Air National Guard numbers will meet—Air National Guard will meet end strength, we are having challenges recruiting enough officers. We may—that may be related to our high retention rates we are currently experiencing with our Active component. Historically, the Guard and Reserve rely heavily on recruiting prior-service trained airmen who separate from Active side.

An efficient and smooth transfer between each component and Civil Service allows the Air Force to access and retain important skill sets and balance our mission needs over time. To make this

process work even better, we are focusing on our Continuum of Service Program. Through Continuum of Service, we are reviewing all Air Force OSD and statutory requirements to identify areas where we can streamline the transfer between components. When statutory issues are identified, we will work with OSD and our counterparts in other services to identify and support legislative proposals to you.

Taking care of our airmen and their families is a top Air Force priority. In the spring of 2009, the Air Force renewed its long-standing commitment to our airmen and families by designating July 2009 through July 2010 as "The Year of the Air Force Family." The observance serves two primary purposes. First, we examined our family support services and policies across the Air Force in order to expand or refine them as required to meet the emerging needs and expectations of our airmen, their families, and the larger Air Force family.

Second, we set aside specific time to recognize the sacrifices and contributions of the members of our entire Air Force family—our Active, Guard, Reserve, civilian, spouses, and family members. We have focused our efforts to ensure we provide robust programs to meet the unique needs of our Guard and Reserve members and their families.

In conjunction with the Year of the Air Force Family, we are also focused on reducing the stressors and mission detractors that impact our airmen and their families. We have taken a holistic approach to addressing airmen resiliency. We are strengthening our Exceptional Family Member Program to ensure we better meet their unique needs. We are dedicated to reducing incidence of sexual assault and suicide among our force. One is too many.

Diversity is an integral part of our mission accomplishment and success in today's Air Force, and will remain in the forefront as we—of that area, as we continue to exclusively attract, develop, and retain highly qualified professionals for the betterment of the total force.

Across all of our programs, we continually strive to improve as we accomplish the Air Force's and the Nation's priorities. I am committed to ensuring we provide the best possible programs that increase our combat capability and take care of our most important asset: our airmen.

I look forward to working with this committee, which has helped shape the Department of Defense into the world's premier defense organization. I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ginsberg follows:]

Senator WEBB. Thank you very much.

I thank all of you for your testimony.

I think what I would like to do is—since I took a good bit of time in my opening statement, I think I would like to just start with a—like, an 8-minute round, and Senator Graham could begin, and then we could go to Senator Hagan and Senator Begich, and then I'll follow on after you.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

When it comes to, Secretary Stanley, the personnel part of the budget, you know, we're going to grow the Army and Marine Corps.

I think we need to. The healthcare component—how do we get a grip on this? What are some ideas that you all are talking about there?

Mr. STANLEY. Well, Senator, I—in my 3 weeks, we haven't really talked a lot about details on—

Senator GRAHAM. You mean, you haven't fixed this in 3 weeks? [Laughter.]

Mr. STANLEY. But, what we have done—I mean, in fact, the very first thing I did—and I think we would—working with Congress even then—was to bring someone over with the skills and qualities to at least fill the position temporarily while we wait on the person, who is to be confirmed at some point in the future, to work with. And so, this has been an actual priority from day one, actually, because we recognize the healthcare costs.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay, well, that's a fair—and congratulations, to all of you, by the way, for having your job. This time last year, you know, we were looking for people like you, and now we've got them.

The idea of the Guard and Reserve recruitment and retention—you know, with the economy like it is, it's a good time for the military, but I think the economy's going to get better—I hope it will, and I'm sure it will eventually—TRICARE benefits for the Guard and Reserve—I'd just like to get your impression about how that program has worked, from each of the services. And, Secretary Stanley, how is it being received by our Guard and Reserve Force, that they are now eligible for TRICARE? They have to pay a premium.

And the second issue, What effect do you believe it would have if we allowed people to retire at 55 if they would do more Active Duty service—sort of earn their way from 60 to 55?

Starting with Secretary Stanley.

Mr. STANLEY. Well, Senator, I know that, in TRICARE benefits, the TRICARE programs, all of those programs are under review right now because it's all a part of the gestalt of looking at all of healthcare. I don't have answers for you today.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Mr. STANLEY. But, we look forward to working with Congress on that.

Senator GRAHAM. From the services' point of view, what are you hearing from the Army, the Marines, and the Air Force?

Mr. LAMONT. Well, we are—from the Army's perspective, TRICARE Reserve has gone over very well. But, we're finding, among particularly our Reserve component, they don't fully appreciate or are educated enough to understand its availability to them. And we think it's incumbent upon this to broaden that perspective so they avail themselves of what's out there.

It's an excellent program, and it's a wonderful incentive. On the Reserve side, we may also, at some point in time, need to look at some potential other incentives, from the healthcare side, as we continue to talk about the—operationalizing the Reserve. But, it's a resource issue, of course, as well, for all of us.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Secretary Garcia?

Mr. GARCIA. Senator, I have the opportunity and the honor to continue to serve in the Reserves, and I will tell you that—and had a Reserve squadron, until coming to take this appointment. And I will tell you the—among those circles, the program is—there’s a lot of awareness of it, and it’s very popular.

The piece that many members have read about, and are very interested in, is what’s been called the “grey area” piece; that is, for retired reservists, not yet 60, being able to access TRICARE Select and some of those programs before their retirement.

As Secretary Lamont said, there’s a price tag that comes with that. I look forward to wrestling with that, with you. But, I can tell you that, among my circles, on the Navy and Marine side, it’s very popular and well thought of.

Mr. GINSBERG. Senator, TRICARE Reserve Select is a very well-liked program. We have good participation rates, as I understand it, within the Air Guard and Air Reserve. And it not just helps—it’s not just a benefit, it’s really a—it provides a tool to our airmen to make sure that they’re medically ready for deployment.

You know, one of the challenges we might have to address—we need to look at this systematically—is whether—the health of the provider network, and whether—you know, at a—maybe a stand-alone Air Guard base, whether we have a sufficient network in place, or we’re taking imbursements. And it’s something we want to look at to ensure that this program is moving along helpfully.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, one last question. The sexual harassment, sexual assault problem is being better identified, and the number of reported cases is growing, which I think is probably an indication, not that there are more—more activity, it’s just getting easier to report it, and people feel more confident about reporting it. But, we’re not nearly where we need to be.

Just very quickly, from each service’s perspective, what are you doing in that regard to enhance the ability of a servicemember to report sexual harassment or assaults in a way they feel will not be detrimental to their career?

Mr. LAMONT. From the Army perspective, we’re looking at it from a couple of different directions. First, we want to make it easier for them to report. We have initiated programs that allow for the confidentiality of the report. Plus, we’re also, as I think we—

Senator GRAHAM. In that regard, do we need to look at changing our laws? Because there’s a lot of privileges available in the—maybe in the civilian side, not available to military members. I know you’ve got a priest penance privilege and limited medical privilege, but just look at that and see if there are some changes we need to make on the Personnel Committee to expand privileges to healthcare providers. I’d just—

Mr. LAMONT. All right.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Mr. LAMONT. And otherwise, as we try to build resilience within the force, particularly on the SHARP—our SHARP situation, we have initiated a program called “I. A.M. Strong”—“I” being “Intervene,” “A” being “Act,” “M” being “Motivate.” And though it’s a command-oriented climate that we’re trying to address, that would respect the dignity of all of our soldiers, we’ve looked for this “I. A.M. Strong” program to educate and train our soldiers, on a peer-

to-peer basis, to remove any stigma of going forward to make those reports.

And we believe it's working, at least as we've seen the number of reports increase. We still believe, unfortunately, that only roughly a third of sexual assaults are being reported.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Mr. GARCIA. Senator, Secretary Mavis has stood up Sexual Assault Prevention Response Office. The dedicated officer—civilian SES—reports directly to him for the first time and a network of SARCs, Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, implemented each unit across the fleet. As you indicated, we are seeing a rise in reported incidents. The challenge is to discern whether that's availability to reporting or whether it's a true spike in incidents. It's something we wrestle with every day.

Mr. GINSBERG. Senator, I think this is a—from the Air Force perspective, this is an issue of leadership, it's a issue of investment, and it's just a leader—a issue of communication. Leadershipwise, it's about showing it, from the highest levels on down, that sexual assault absolutely won't be tolerated and that it goes against—from our perspective, goes against everything—all of those core values that we hold dear.

It's about putting in money for a strong, baseline program, a good, strong, healthy organization, along with funding for investigations, and very active and aggressive investigations. And it's also a matter of just making sure that those who are victims know that their resources and reporting channels are available to them. We have an ability for somebody who is a victim to come forward and provide limited information about what happened so they'll come forward. It's called restricted reporting, and that's provided a useful channel for victims.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, all, for your service. I'm going to have to run to another hearing, but I shall return.

Senator WEBB. Thank you very much, Senator Graham.

Senator Hagan.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And I do, too, want to thank all of you for your service to our country. I really do appreciate it.

Secretary Stanley, you mentioned, in your opening remarks, about the Military Spouse Career Advancement Account—the “Mica,” as it's being referred to [MyCAA]—and about the stop in the implementation of it. I have a serious concern with that, because, one, neither Congress nor the people who were beneficiaries of this program were given any sort of up-front notification about any of the problems that were being seen in the program. And this pause has certainly caused a lot of concern to many people in my State, in North Carolina, because it's an excellent program and a lot of people are taking advantage of it. And I think the uncertainty that's been put forth right now has resulted in the Department's decision—has certainly negatively impacted and affected the morale of our servicemembers and their families. And it certainly has had, I think, an adverse impact on family readiness.

But, one of the questions I have in the President's 2011 budget, which reflects increased funding for this enhanced career and edu-

cational opportunities, Does it address the longer-term needs of the program?

Mr. STANLEY. Okay. We are—first of all, we are addressing the concerns, short-term and long-term. And the Secretary is now, at this time, you know, making a decision, looking at options that have been presented to—you know, to him. But, I will say that there are still some unanswered questions on long-term, but I feel confident that they're going to be addressed. And I certainly share your concern about what's happened, in terms of the program being stopped. I understand that.

Senator HAGAN. Well, the lack of notification was certainly alarming to, I think, Members of Congress and the people who were the beneficiaries.

As far as improving the implementation of the program, do you need more specialists on staff to help with that? Or is that some of the things you're looking into?

Mr. STANLEY. Actually, in my arrival—just to be very blunt.

Senator HAGAN. Okay.

Mr. STANLEY. I was sworn in on the 16th, and I learned about it on the 16th.

Senator HAGAN. Wow.

Mr. STANLEY. So—

Voice: Welcome aboard. [Laughter.]

Mr. STANLEY.—I'm going to—

Senator HAGAN. Wow.

Mr. STANLEY.—so, I'm—we're addressing the issues dealing with MyCAA—

Senator HAGAN. Okay.

Mr. STANLEY.—as we move forward. I'm very optimistic about it working out okay.

Senator HAGAN. Okay.

Another question, concerning the Census. I'm concerned that servicemembers that are deployed during the conduct of the 2010 Census will be counted in a negative way that impacts the communities that host military installations. And for the 1990 and 2000 Census, the decision was made to count deployed servicemembers as overseas.

North Carolina currently has approximately 41,200 servicemembers deployed as a part of the overseas contingencies, and in the event that they are counted as prescribed by the Census Bureau, areas with large concentrations of military personnel, I believe, will be significantly undercounted and underfunded for the next 10 years.

What's preventing the Defense Manpower Data Center from provided the Bureau—the Census Bureau with information regarding the base of last assignment or permanent U.S. duty station as the primary response for our deployed servicemembers that are currently engaged in overseas contingencies?

Mr. STANLEY. Senator, I'm going to ask to take that question for the record.

Senator HAGAN. Okay. That's fair.

Mr. STANLEY. Because I'd like to get back to you with a very specific—

Senator HAGAN. Okay.

Mr. STANLEY.—and correct answer.

[The information referred to follows:]

Senator HAGAN. Well, let me go to one other one. As far as—we were talking about suicide. One of you referred to that. So, Secretaries Lamont, Garcia, and Ginsberg, I think we have witnessed an unacceptable number of suicides within our military population, and some of these losses, hopefully, could have been prevented if servicemembers had the ability to access professional care during the early stages of, you know, emotional distress. And I'm sure we all agree that we've got to reduce those numbers. What measures are being taken within the services to ensure that our military men and women receive and gain easier access to mental healthcare without being stigmatized—that's, obviously, sometimes associated with that—and with going through the chain of command?

Secretary Lamont?

Mr. LAMONT. First, you're absolutely right, we take suicide—the loss of any soldier, through any means, very, very seriously. And it truly is one of the very highest priorities that we have. We look at it from early identification of risk factors, as well as early intervention when we recognize those risk factors, to move in and encourage, as best we can, to have those individuals who may exhibit those risk factors to seek out help.

We have instituted a program designed to reduce the stigma of reaching out for mental health issues. Actually, you know, what we're finding out with some of our younger soldiers, who, for whatever reasons, do not wish to meet personally with a healthcare provider, for instance—we have a software program, that they go online and they self-address—

Senator HAGAN. Right.

Mr. LAMONT.—their issues. And they—it's become a very valuable tool for us. But, it's going to take a lot of effort.

Also, we clearly have to address the resiliency side, and we're making our effort to do that through a program called Comprehensive Soldier Fitness, where we explore, not only just the physical health, but the mental, the emotional and the spiritual well-being of the soldier, as well, to build that mental health resiliency as best we can to address the issues going on in his or her life.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you.

Mr. GARCIA. Senator, I appreciate your question. For the first time, last year, our Marine rate approached that of the National rate; we normed for age and gender. It's an issue we brief daily and constantly look for a correlation that we can zero in on.

We focused much of our training at the NCO level. We feel that they have the most insight and perspective to what our young sailors and marines are wrestling with, those issues. But every marine, every sailor receives training and is made aware that they have access to master's-level counseling. It is confidential unless, in the aftermath of that training, the counselor feels that the individual is suicidal, homicidal, or unable to—is unfit for duty. But, everyone is aware of it from boot-camp level on.

Senator HAGAN. And do you think these things are making a difference in the attitude and the health of our men and women?

Mr. GARCIA. I think there is a—

Senator HAGAN. Great.

Mr. GARCIA.—undeniably, a new level of awareness from E-1 to O-10. I've seen the training that takes place at Marine Boot Camp, at MCRD. It's the first time where a Marine drill instructor to—a new boot camp marine sees that drill instructor take his cover off and address him personally, in a way that he has not, yet. It speaks to the importance and the significance, I think, that the Corps and the Department are placing on this.

Senator HAGAN. Okay.

Mr. GINSBERG. Well, Senator, obviously it's a tremendous tragedy even when one servicemember, you know, takes their life. I know it's a—you know, we pride ourselves, in the Air Force, being a family, and when one feels so alienated that it's obviously—it becomes a major problem at the highest reaches.

You know, this is a matter—this goes to our staffing—our capacity levels, in terms of having enough psychiatrists and trained psychologists. We, in the Air Force, are doing well, but obviously there's tremendous competition with the private sector for trained psychiatrists and trained psychologists. The bonuses that you provide us are absolutely essential for us to grow our force and to bring in psychiatrists and trained psychologists.

I'd also say that this is—you know, and to address the stigma, one of the things that we're doing in the Air Force is to locate our mental health clinics within MTFs, within regular divisions within a—within the hospital, basically, where somebody who's going in to get treatment is not seen as going to some special clinic, but is just part of—accessing regular care. And we want to normalize care.

Senator HAGAN. That's good.

All right, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Senator Hagan.

And just to follow on for a moment on that line of questioning, I believe you could show—and, in fact, the Chief of Staff of the Army recently brought me a chart to this effect—that there is a direct correlation between dwell time—the amount of time that people have between deployments—and the percentage of emotional difficulties that are in these units. And that's why I introduced this dwell-time amendment, in '07. When Chief of Staff of the Army called me and said they were going to 15-month deployments, with only 12 months dwell time back in the United States before they redeployed—having spent 4 years as a committee counsel over in the House Veterans Committee, when we first started examining the difficulties of people who had served in Vietnam, I said, "You're" first of all, I said, "I can't believe you're going to do that. I don't think there's any operational requirement that could—should cause you, at this point in our history, to put that kind of pressure on our people. And you're going to have challenges on the other end of doing this." And, quite frankly, we're seeing that.

And all of your responses basically go to the means—and I salute these means—of addressing the situation once it occurs, but I don't think there's anything more valuable than putting the right kind of dwell time on our units. And particularly, when you look at the young age of the people who are doing these multiple deployments, and where they are in terms of addressing issues of adulthood.

Mr. LAMONT. If I may—

Senator WEBB. Mr. Lamont, do you want to—

Mr. LAMONT.—just add a comment to that. We have any number of programs that are well intentioned, well resourced, it doesn't matter. There is nothing more important than exactly what you say—is the dwell time of our soldiers, with their families and others, that will help them decompress and serve them so much better in this kind of situation. It is dwell time.

Senator WEBB. I totally agree. Thank you for saying that.

Senator BEGICH.

Senator BEGICH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Let me—I want to talk about TRICARE for a second, but then I actually want to get back to the SARC. In Anchorage, in municipal government, we call it SART, a very similar program, I think, but I want—that's what I want to ask you.

But, Secretary Stanley, let me—I represent Alaska. It's very unique when it comes to TRICARE. As you know, it's the one that is not managed by a contractor, out of the whole system. And we have some very unique situations. Alaska's population, in total, is—about two-thirds has Federal healthcare in some form or another: Medicaid, Medicare, Indian Health Services, VA, Federal employed. So, it's probably the highest percentage, I would bet, or per capita, in the country. So, it has some unique challenges. And then, geographically, you know, the geography of Alaska is very vast, and so we have some great challenges.

I have introduced a piece of legislation to set up a task force for Alaska to bring all the different agencies that deal with healthcare and TRICARE as part of that—and DOD would be at that table—to try to figure out, you know, what's the best way to deliver services. I don't know if you've had any chance to see that legislation, have any comment on it. And if you haven't seen it yet, we'd be—I'd be anxious to get your comment at—for the record, at some point, of the—if you think the task force will be of help for something very unique, I think, in Alaska. And I don't know if you have any comment on that.

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, Senator. I haven't seen the legislation, but I've seen what I can best describe now are anecdotal pieces of information that tell me, in Alaska, we have some unique issues that deal with healthcare, as you've already, you know, described. So, I look forward to not only looking at the legislation, but working very closely with you to address some very significant issues.

Senator BEGICH. Great, I would love to get, for the record, your response, but that's—I appreciate that.

[The information referred to follows:]

Senator BEGICH. The other thing I want to say—and the folks from the Federal Government that have been working on the TRICARE, that have been managing it for us, have done a great job. But, I'm also very pleased to see that there is kind of a reexamination. How would a contractor work? Would there be a benefit? Is there some advantage, or maybe not advantage, depending on how it's all looked at? So, I am pleased with that, and that perspective, and I want you to know that. But, do you have, from a—from your view, working with TRICARE contractor, what would you consider some of the advantages that you have seen in the value of delivering that healthcare? From a contractor delivering it, versus the way it's done in Alaska?

Mr. STANLEY. I'm afraid my answer would probably be personal, only because—

Senator BEGICH. Personal is sometimes better.

Mr. STANLEY.—I'm a recipient—

Senator BEGICH. Very good.

Mr. STANLEY.—of TRICARE benefits and the contractor. And from what I've benefited from, I've—it's been pretty transparent' to me, in being able to use a system that works very well. But, I don't think that's going to address some of the macro issues we're talking about. And I'm also aware of the fact that there are some, already, challenges that exist with the TRICARE system as it already—you know, as it's presently presented, with our contractors as we address contracting issues. So, I'm looking into those issues now, but I will tell you that there are some pluses—some significant pluses—but, there are also some—probably some negatives that—you know, as we look at that. But, I don't know what all of those are right now.

Senator BEGICH. As you develop that, will you share it with the committee? And—

Mr. STANLEY. Absolutely.

[The information referred to follows:]

Senator BEGICH. At least my side would be very interested in that.

Mr. STANLEY. I'll look forward to it.

Senator BEGICH. And then, again, as we examine the role of TRICARE, the contractor who delivers TRICARE, as a potential option or augmentation to what we do in Alaska, I'm going to be very interested as we move through this over the next several months.

Two other things. One—again, one more on TRICARE, and that is, one of the situations—and I use Alaska, obviously, because I'm—I represent Alaska—one of the things we do, if you take Medicare, Medicaid, TRICARE, Indian Health Services, VA, we're always chasing the highest rate—you know, whatever—the reimbursement rate. Now, the problem we have in Alaska is, we have very high rates, no matter what. I mean, it's just delivery of care, that cost of care. You know, we don't have a teaching hospital, for example. We lack a lot of things that other communities can tap into and, therefore, keep their costs more competition. And ours, we've been very high-cost in. But, we've also been very fortunate, because, under the rules, you've be able to—DOD and—or, the Federal Government has been able to utilize, under a demonstration ability, to have a higher-rate reimbursement in Alaska. It's only been in a demonstration capacity they've been able to do it. Obviously, we're very interested. I know there's a study going on, or at least a potential study, that will talk about how those rates are different; and if they are, how do we make them more permanent? Because, obviously, doctors—and I think some of the comments made here is getting those doctors to perform those services under TRICARE. The reimbursement rate is critical.

In Anchorage, for example, which is the largest provider, or largest city—you know, about 43 percent of the State's population—I think we're down to—on Medicare, for new Medicare patients, I think we're down to less than three or four docs that will accept them. That's it. So, we are the tip of the iceberg of what's going

to happen in this country, very rapidly, because our cost differential is now getting to a point where primary-care doctors can't afford to do it; and second, there are less and less of them being produced, in the sense of the system.

So, I would like, if you have any comment on, one, the demonstration project. And again, if you're not familiar, I'd be very interested. And then, how we go about getting some permanency to this, because when docs see a pointer that's not permanent, then they just say, you know, "We're just done waiting, we've got to move on to other," honestly, business has to continue for what they do. So, do you have any comment on that? The demonstration project, how do we move it to permanency, and is that a realistic viewpoint?

Mr. STANLEY. Well, thank you, Senator.

Let me just say that I've been briefed on the project, in general.

Senator BEGICH. Good.

Mr. STANLEY. And my commitment is to work closely with you, not to study the problem to death—

Senator BEGICH. Now you're talking. [Laughter.]

Mr. STANLEY.—but to move forward with a solution.

Senator BEGICH. Good.

Mr. STANLEY. So, I'm aware of it. Now the issue is, okay, addressing this on the degree of permanency, which is why I put in place someone to help—what's an expertise, immediately—that's a physician—you know, until we get somebody confirmed. And I can't wait that long.

Senator BEGICH. Right.

Mr. STANLEY. Which is the reason we're moving, kind of, like at flank speed, for lack of a better word—

Senator BEGICH. Good.

Mr. STANLEY.—to put things in place and address these issues. There are other issues, too, as you know.

Senator BEGICH. Absolutely. We would love to see confirmations happen very rapidly, but don't wait for that. Move forward on progress. And I appreciate your comments.

I will end, Mr. Chairman, just on one—and this is more of a comment to the—as a former mayor, we worked on a project called SART, which is Sexual Assault Response Team, which is a combination public service, police—and they all are centralized into one location. They work with the community hospitals. It's good for investigation purposes. It has a kids' unit. It has a variety of things that—one of the pieces to this equation—and I haven't asked the—and I'm not asking for a response, at this point. I just want you to become aware, if you can, with what we're doing in Anchorage, which is the SART team.

And why I say that, there's a very important component of how the person who's—who has been the victim works through the process, and how that's handled, which is critical to your investigations, conviction rates, as well as to the care that's necessary. And then, if there are family members engaged in this, in the sense of a child who's also been assaulted, there's a whole process that is much different than the adult process.

And the SART program has been recognized around the Nation as a very cohesive and—like you, we saw rates go up, in the sense

of reporting, but we also saw conviction rates go up, we also education capacity increasing—and young people, children especially, which is probably the hardest to deal with, with sexual assault or violence in a household or in a home.

I'd just ask you—and we'd be happy to supply you some information—it's very unique and has been very, very successful. And in Anchorage, as you know, we have two large military bases, literally as far as that door is from our facilities and our population. And we know—we have a great relationship with the military that—we know this program has had some impact.

So, I'd just encourage you, as you work through this very troubling issue, to be very frank with you, but one we have to deal with, not only from a sexual assault on the officer, but also so many families are now part of the military family that, 30 years ago, was not the case, but today, it's 70 or 75 percent of the families. And so, the kids of this population, also, we need to make sure they're getting the services they need, and education they need. So, I would just encourage you to—

Mr. STANLEY. Will do, sir.

Senator BEGICH. Okay, and we'll get you some information from staff.

Mr. STANLEY. Great. Thank you.

Senator WEBB. Thank you very much, Senator Begich.

Senator Chambliss.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, first of all, let me just say that I want to thank all of you for what you do. You're charged with managing the most important aspect of our military, and that's the people and the programs that support them.

I know much of what you do deals with numbers, but I also know you have an appreciation for what those numbers represent, in terms of the individual and his or her family, and what it means to our Nation.

You all, along with our second panel, will help give us a sense of how we're doing, and how we can best continue to support the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families. So, I thank you for being here.

And, Secretary Ginsberg, it's always great to see a Georgian on a panel like this—

Mr. GINSBERG. It's my honor to be here. Thank you, Senator.

Senator CHAMBLISS.—so thanks for your service.

Secretary Stanley, let me just ask you if you are familiar with the situation of the commissary at Dobbins and the one that we're transferring from Gillem to Dobbins. Does that ring a bell at all with you?

Mr. STANLEY. Vaguely. If you keep talking, Senator, I think I might pull something up, here. [Laughter.]

Senator CHAMBLISS. I'm not surprised that you don't, but—

Mr. STANLEY. Okay.

Senator CHAMBLISS.—basically, it's a—a BRAC decision was made to close Fort Gillem, in Atlanta, and that's the commissary that has served our retired population for decades. And a decision was made, by your predecessor, to construct a new commissary at Dobbins that obviously will continue to operate, and it's going to

serve our retired population. And it's in the hands of DeCA right now. That's why I'm not surprised you're not familiar with it. But, I wish you would familiarize yourself with it. At some point, you're going to have some significant input into it, and it may just be an issue of DeCA trying to find the funding for it. But, in any event, it is obviously a critical issue for the retired population, as well as for our Active Duty folks in the area.

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, sir.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Secretary Lamont, in light of the Fort Hood incident last November, can you elaborate on specific steps that the Army is taking to better recognize the presence of soldiers who may have become radicalized, as Hasan was?

Mr. LAMONT. I can tell you this. We are going through a very extensive internal review to look at all components of extremism that may have crept into society and, of course, may touch more and more into our military services, and what we can do to address those. We're aware of some apparent shortcomings in our officer evaluation forums and in our enlistment evaluations, and how some of the questions—some of the right questions may just not get asked. And some of the identifying risk factors may not just be exposed, as well.

As you know, there is a Defensewide Fort Hood review in progress right now. And, as I understand it—and perhaps Dr. Stanley knows more than I—that perhaps sometime this summer there will be a full report, as all of the services, I believe, are involved in that report. But, certainly the Army is drilling down very deeply to see, What in the world did we miss here?

Senator CHAMBLISS. Let me just mention to all of you—I think Senator Graham may have mentioned this in his opening comments—about the Reserve and—the Guard and Reserve retirement initiative, early retirement initiative, that we have been successful at having put in place, that we're now looking to extend the retirement date back to service beginning on September 11. And if there are any stumbling blocks out there, I would appreciate hearing from you now, if you're aware of anything. Obviously, funding is an issue. We're going to continue to work that until we, ultimately, have that retirement date, or that service date to qualify for retirement, go back to September 11, when so many of our men and women began being called up. Any comments any of you have, relative to any issues that are outstanding, that might be in our way on that issue?

Mr. STANLEY. Senator, I hadn't heard anything, Senator. And I'm not sure if my colleagues have?

Mr. LAMONT. I've heard very little.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Okay.

Mr. LAMONT. But, as you say, I—it—the number- one thing that we always look on something like that, of course, is the resource concerns—

Senator CHAMBLISS. Yup.

Mr. LAMONT.—as you are well aware.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Yeah. Well, we'll continue to work that from our end.

One other question. Secretary Lamont, I understand that the Vice Chief of the Army is currently hosting an online virtual con-

ference regarding the future of the U.S. Army Officer Corps. The central premise behind this virtual conference is the recruitment and employment of talent within the Army. Is—this sounds like a great idea, and a great way to look at the caliber of the young men and women who are—who make up our officer corps, from flag officers on down, or—could you give us any comment on that? And are any of the other services doing something similar to this, or have plans for it?

Mr. LAMONT. Well, I understand the goal of what the Vice is after, here. As—our officer structure is not where we need it to be, given some of the demands that we've had over the past 8 or 9 years, and as we've moved to our modular rotational model in ARFORGEN, it has caused some fairly serious changes in how our officer structure is handled.

And I think there is an effort out there, particularly in the grades of major, for instance, or that—there are serious shortcomings there, in the numbers that we have available. And I think these—through—what he is trying to do is look for any acceptable options and alternatives to how we identify our officer corps, and where we can move them within the structure that's available now, our other grade challenges, grade-plate challenges, that we have.

Mr. GINSBERG. I'm not familiar with the program, but we work very closely with the Army. I'd love to reach out with my colleague, here, and learn more about it. Certainly provide some formal views to you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Okay.

Secretary Garcia, Secretary Stanley, anything going on in your branch, similar to this?

Mr. STANLEY. I'm not familiar with the program. I'm, in fact, learning about it as he's talking, Senator.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Yeah. Well, it does sound like a good idea, because everybody's got the same issues, relative to the makeup of our officer corps. The Army and the Marine Corps, I guess, have a little bit different situation, just because you've been taxed more than anybody else, but it is an issue that sounds to me like it has a lot of merit to it, and I would encourage every branch to follow suit, there.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Senator Chambliss.

I'm going to ask a couple of service-specific questions, and then, Secretary Stanley, I'd like to ask you a series of questions.

Let me say, I was a boxer for 8 years. You've been bobbing and weaving for an hour and 15 minutes, here. [Laughter.]

So, I'm going to ask you a series of questions to sort of get us all looking forward, since you just came to this job and I just assumed the chairmanship. But, first, I want to put something in front of the service assistant Secretaries.

There was an article in Military Times last week on prescription drug use in the military. I don't know if you all saw that article, or not. But, it pointed out that one in six servicemembers is on some form of psychiatric drug; 17 percent of the active Duty force, and as much as 6 percent of the deployed troops are on antidepressants; and the use of psychiatric medications has increased about 76 percent since the start of these current wars.

And I, first, would like to express my appreciation to Senator Cardin for having brought this issue to the attention of people here in the Senate. But, these statistics, quite frankly, are astounding to me. I'd like to know if—how familiar the three assistant Secretaries are with this issue inside your departments, and what your thoughts are. Is this an indication of the overall fatigue of the force, with these constant deployments, or is it an indication of a different approach to medical treatment? Are we on top of this?

I know that last year there was a provision in the Defense bill to require the Department to report on the administration and prescription of these drugs.

But, Secretary Lamont, let me start with you. What are your thoughts on this?

Mr. LAMONT. Well, I'm not specifically aware of the article you're speaking about. I was TDY last week. However, I am well aware of the concerns we have with our pain management program. Those are the prescription drugs that we have found to have really crept into our system much—in much wider usage than we were ever aware of before.

I'll also suggest to you, like—drugs like Oxycontin, I understand is used both in pain management and as an antidepressant. And that's caused a number of concerns, because—the fear that they may be prescribed by separate healthcare providers.

What we have done to try to address the pain management side, we—what we found was, depending on where you went for treatment, there could be an entirely different model, if you would, of how pain is treated and how pain drugs are prescribed. There was no consistency there. So, with the various services, we began a task force—joint task force, this last fall, which is due to report, at any date now, on how we can come together with some kind of consistency in how we handle our pain management problem—pain management equals the drugs—and how we administer the proliferation of drugs in our military system.

Our soldiers are coming back wounded, sore, injured, need of rehab, and that's—perhaps the easy answer, early on, was pain-managed prescription. But, there are other means. And we hope this joint task force report will come to grips with how we can provide some consistency, not just throughout the Army—I mean, we found that every Army Medical Center was dealing with pain in altogether different ways, all individual to their situation. But, not an Armywide program at all. And I think, with this task force, we'll have the services all together, and hopefully all in sync, of how we can address this growing problem.

Senator WEBB. Secretary Garcia?

Mr. GARCIA. Senator, I'm familiar with the piece, and, as I understood it, it also posited, or suggested, that there were—elicit drug use, to include in theater. We continue to drug test randomly across the fleet, forward-deployed and at home.

On the prescription side, our SAHA, our Special Assistant for Health Affairs, has initiated a working group, generated by the piece, to research this apparent spike, especially on the Marine side. And that's where we are. All I can do is continue to keep you posted on the results.

Senator WEBB. Secretary Ginsberg.

Mr. GINSBERG. Senator, I'm not familiar with the article, but I think you raise, obviously, a very important question about the extent of prescription drug use and whether, you know, this is an indicator of stress, or is this a new push to medicine? And I'd very much like to get some concrete data from our surgeon-general community, and would be more than happy to provide that to you.

[The information referred to follows:]

Senator WEBB. I'd just say, as a—as an observation, one, we do have a really stressed, young force, because of these deployments. And this is an indicator I think we really should be looking very—tracking very closely, with repeated deployments and these sorts of things.

And the other is, just purely as an observation, from looking at where they are deployed and the restriction of the use of alcohol, I would say it's—having been a journalist in Afghanistan before I started doing this, it is always rather ironic to me that, for reasons of comity with these other countries, we didn't allow our troops to use alcohol, but, I'll tell you, I was in a lot of villages in Afghanistan where they—everybody had their marijuana patch and their opium patch.

So, they're—you know, the relief of stress on individuals is handled differently in different cultures, and that may be something you want to look in. It's a very troubling statistic, to me. And I hope we can look at it, not simply medically, but in these other ways, as well.

Secretary Ginsberg, can you give me some—or give this committee, this subcommittee, some insight on this decision to provide aviation pay to nonrated pilots in the Remotely-Piloted Aircraft Program, what the justification and—how does that fit into traditional definitions of flight pay, and those sorts of things?

Mr. GARCIA. Absolutely. Well, you know, Senator, the Air Force is meeting a very high demand to provide remotely-piloted aircraft—combat air patrols to our COCOM commander in Afghanistan and Iraq. We are currently providing 41 CAPs to—combat air patrols—to the theater. And we're working, by the end of fiscal year '13, to provide 65 CAPs. This—what we're trying to do is develop a career field, where our airmen, who are providing this critical support to our forces on the ground, our brothers in the Marine Corps and the Army, as well as many are Air Force officers and enlisted on the ground, providing them this direct support. We want to make sure they can grow and develop.

The incentive pays are a critical part of maintaining a robust pipeline of airmen who are operating these systems.

Senator WEBB. Under what category are they paid now?

Mr. GINSBERG. I'm sorry?

Senator WEBB. Under what category are they being paid?

Mr. GINSBERG. Well, it's a—we—this is an OSD- approved—under a—of course, the broad authority that Congress provides, under the—it's the—it's aviation continuation-paylike pay, and it—

Senator WEBB. And it's not called “flight pay”?

Mr. GINSBERG. It's not called “flight pay,” but it's a—it's a different authority that we're providing under. And this about just making—this—these officers and enlisted members are providing

absolutely critical direct support to our forces on the ground, and we are putting tremendous stresses on them. Our crew ratios are not sufficient, at this point. They have a hard time getting leave, regular leave. And we need to provide them—we're not giving them the opportunity to move to new assignments as flexibly as other career areas. And we need to provide them pay and bonuses that will help make sure that this career field remains attractive.

I went to Creech early in my tenure, to Creech Airfield, where we have a lot of our operators. And it is, you know, absolutely astounding, what those airmen are doing to provide day-in-and-day-out support, truly lifesaving work.

Senator WEBB. Okay, thank you.

Mr. GINSBERG. So, again, it's about making sure that they get the right pay—

Senator WEBB. I think that—

Mr. GINSBERG.—and benefits that they deserve.

Senator WEBB. Secretary Stanley, I believe that this is a good time, with your coming in, to get a strong analytical look at how all of the special incentive pays, bonus pays, reenlistment pays, enlistment—how all of these fit together in a way that is beneficial to the people who are serving, and also to the efficiency of our programs.

And what I would like to do in a—rather than taking a great deal of time this morning, what I would like to do is to work with you and your staff to develop a matrix, so that we can fully understand what we're doing in these programs. I believe that the best way to address issues is, first, to assemble, clearly, the facts. And so, we are going to come to you with some questions about the incentive pays, the special pays, the reenlistment bonuses, the whole panorama, to get an understanding of how they are used, how many people are used, what the criteria are, how many of these are directed by the Congress, how many of them are subject to the discretion of the implementers—your staff and the other—

Mr. STANLEY. Yes.

Senator WEBB.—service departments—so that we can have a clear picture, as we move forward in these programs. I'm not sure of the last time that that's been done. I don't want to go through every one of these and ask for your justifications, but we're going to be having some questions. And I don't want these to be considered questions for the record that are going to be answered, you know—

Mr. STANLEY. Yes, sir.

Senator WEBB.—a month or two months. I really want to work on this so we can aggressively address it.

And there's a couple of other areas that I would like to get some feedback from you on. One of them, I'm sure you're familiar with, this mentor program that there were numerous articles, particularly USA Today, about where retired flag officers are getting up to \$2600 a day to come in and basically give advice. And you know the situation, you're a retired flag. You know, a retired four-star can be making in excess of \$200,000 a year and then be working for a defense company, and then be—then come in and be getting this sort of pay to give advice that, quite frankly, traditionally, has

been a part of having worn the uniform, a sort of a continuing stewardship.

So, there's a lot of questions, here in the Congress, about how that reflects upon the dignity of service, quite frankly. And we want to get to the bottom of how that program is run.

And then, there's another area, which relates to military fellowships, to think tanks. And I would like to get some data on this with respect to the numbers of people who are involved in this and how taxpayer dollars are being spent, beyond regular military compensation, on areas that are called "tuition" for Active Duty military officers to go over and work on a think tank and not only be paid by the—you know, by the taxpayers for their regular military compensation, but actually being paid tens of thousand dollars into these think tanks for this office space, et cetera. Would—I don't—you know, I don't think I have a full understanding of how this works, and we'd like to get specific data from you. Each service may be doing it differently, but we'd like to assemble that data.

And, with that, I thank all of you for your testimony, and look forward to working with you on a very close basis. And our door is open for any issues that you want to bring to the subcommittee, or to my office, personally.

Thank you very much.

Mr. STANLEY. I appreciate that.

Mr. LAMONT. Thank you.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you very much. [Pause.]

Senator WEBB. Our second panel, we will have members of the military coalition, a consortium of nationally prominent uniformed service and veteran organizations: Master Chief (Retired) Joseph Barnes, national executive director of the Fleet Reserve Association; Ms. Kathleen Moakler is a government relations director of the National Military Family Association; Master Sergeant Michael Cline is the executive director of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States; Ms. Deirdre Parke Holleman is the executive director of The Retired Enlisted Association; and Colonel (Retired) Steven Strobridge is the director of government relations for the Military Officers Association of America.

I mentioned earlier that we had two statements that would be put in the record. Probably more appropriate they put in at this point, rather than at the beginning of the hearing.

[The information referred to follows:]

Senator WEBB. Welcome, to all of you.

And I suppose we can start with Mr. Barnes and move to Mr. Strobridge.

Welcome, sir.

STATEMENT OF MASTER CHIEF JOSEPH L. BARNES, USN (RET.), NATIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION.

Mr. BARNES. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Senator Graham, distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

The Military Coalition's statement reflects the consensus of coalition organizations on a broad range of important personnel issues

and extensive work by eight legislative committees, each comprised of representatives from the Coalition's 34 military and veterans organizations.

The five of us will address key issues important to the active, Guard and Reserve, retiree, and survivor communities, and military families, and will conclude healthcare concerns which impact everyone within these groups, including our magnificent wounded warriors.

Before proceeding, I wish to thank you and the entire subcommittee and your outstanding staff for effective leadership and strong support of essential pay and benefit program enhancements, and particularly for programs to adequately care for our wounded warriors and their families.

Adequate service end strengths are absolutely essential to success in Iraq and Afghanistan, and to sustaining our operations vital—other operations vital to our National security. And the Coalition strongly supports proposed Army and Navy end-strength levels in 2011. A recent Navy Times story entitled "Sailor Shortage" cites too much work to do in the Navy and not enough people to do it, and lists the associated effects, which include little time for rest, fewer people to maintain and repair shipboard equipment, crew members with valuable skills being pulled for other jobs and not replaced, and lower material ship readiness.

As referenced by the first panel, the strain of repeated deployments continues, and is also related to the adequacy of end strengths. Now we're tracking disturbing indicators of the effects, which include increasing drug and alcohol use, more mental healthcare appointments, alarming suicide rates, plus more military divorces. The unrelenting stress on servicemembers and their families is a serious and continuing concern that can lead to very serious morale, readiness, and retention challenges.

Pay comparability remains a top priority, and the Coalition strongly supports the authorization of a 1.9- percent 2011 Active Duty pay hike. We appreciate your past support for higher-than-ECI pay increases, which have collectively reduced the pay gap to 2.4 percent.

Adequate funding for military recruiting efforts is important. During high retention periods, it's natural to look at reducing these accounts. However, sufficient resources are essential to ensuring continuing recruiting success. It's noteworthy that three-quarters of the optimum recruiting-aged young people do not qualify for military service, and the services must maximize efforts through our military recruiters to recruit optimum-quality personnel across the Armed Services.

The Coalition strongly supports the authorization to ship two personal vehicles in conjunction with PCS moves, along with long overdue increases in PCS mileage rates. We appreciate the distinguished Chairman's leadership on the enactment and implementation of the post-9/11 GI Bill and DOD policies on transferability options for personnel nearing retirement. However, technical corrections are still needed to ensure eligibility for members of the U.S. Public Health Service and NOAA Corps.

Adequate programs, facilities, and support services for personnel impacted by BRAC actions, rebasing, and global repositioning is

very important, particularly during wartime, which, alone, results in significant stress on servicemembers and their families. And the Coalition notes with concern the 19-plus-percent reductions in military construction and family housing accounts in the proposed 2011 budget request.

Finally, the Coalition remains committed to adequate funding to ensure access to the commissary benefit for all beneficiaries. This is an essential benefit, and the Defense Commissary Agency is to be commended for highly cost-effective management of 255 stores in 13 countries.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present our recommendations.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Barnes follows.]

Senator WEBB. Thank you very much, Mr. Barnes.

Ms. Moakler, welcome.

STATEMENT OF KATHLEEN B. MOAKLER, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIRECTOR, NATIONAL MILITARY FAMILY ASSOCIATION

Ms. MOAKLER. Thank you. Chairman Webb, Senator Graham, thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of military families, our Nation's families.

Many families are facing their ninth year of deployment, many have dealt with multiple deployments. We have second-graders who have only known a lifestyle with a parent absent from their lives for months at a time, over and over again. We appreciate the many initiatives and programs supported by this subcommittee in the past. Military One Source, increased benefits and support for surviving families, and the Yellow Ribbon Program are just a few. We have expanded access to mental health counseling across components, although the need continues to grow.

Now military families expect these programs. They have become part of the overall fabric of family readiness. The challenge that now faces us is making sure that our family readiness programs receive sustained funding and continue to be included in the annual budget process. As the war has progressed, family readiness requirements have evolved. Some new programs have been initiated without evaluating already existing programs to see how they might have been adapted.

The congressionally-mandated Military Family Readiness Council has begun an evaluation process. We endorse this process and hope that it will result in the elimination of repetitive or redundant programs. Existing programs can be improved, such as adding provisions for travel for family members participating in the Reserve-component Yellow Ribbon Program.

With budget cuts and shortfalls looming, we should not randomly reduce funding to family programs, across the board. As redundant programs are identified, their elimination can add to efficiencies. Servicemembers and their families cite MWR programs, like gyms, libraries, and other installation-provided services, as important to their well-being during deployments. Substantial cuts to these programs make them wonder why services talk about support, yet often cut or reduce the same programs that are identified as the most important by our families.

One of the ways to evaluate the efficacy of programs is research. Our Association has spoken, for several years, concerning research into the effects of continuing deployments on our most vulnerable population: our military children. We appreciate the inclusion of a provision calling for a study in last year's NDAA. In May 2008, we commissioned the RAND Corporation to do a longitudinal study on the experience of 1,500 families. Over the course of a year, RAND interviewed both the nondeployed caregiver parent and one child per family between the ages of 11 and 17. We addressed two key questions: How are school-aged children faring? And what types of issues do military children face, related to deployment?

The baseline findings were published in the January issue of the *Journal of Pediatrics*. The study found, as the months of parental deployment increased, so did the child's challenges. The total number of months away mattered more than the number of deployments. Older children experienced more difficulties during deployment, and there is a direct correlation between the mental health of the caregiver and the well-being of the child. It was interesting to note that in the initial findings, there were no differences in results between service or components.

What are the implications? Families facing longer deployments need targeted support, especially for older teens and girls. Supports need to be in place across the entire deployment cycle, including reintegration, and some nondeployed parents may need targeted mental health support.

We still hear about needs for childcare. While most traditional childcare needs are being met, innovative strategies for after-hours care and respite care should be explored. These strategies need to be implemented across the services, as well. Drop-in care for medical appointments, either at the CDC or at the MTF itself, can go a long way in improving access to care and eliminating missed appointments.

I, too, must bring up the MyCAA Program, with an underline and an exclamation point. Several years ago, Congress mandated DOD create a program to promote portable careers for military spouses. The result was a very popular My Career Advancement Accounts, MyCAA. Recent numbers indicate that 98,000 spouses already are enrolled in the program, an additional 38,000 have applied but have not yet completed the process. Unfortunately, DOD, as we have heard today, has recently had to suspend the program. We have heard, from many concerned military spouses using the MyCAA program, about the loss of funding for courses in which they were enrolled, and how they are scrambling to come up with the funds to continue, be it for an individual course that they are taking online or a semester.

But, I think what bothered them the most was the way the notification was handled. There was no advance notification, information was sent via a press release. This, when the program was in possession of everyone's email address. Many view this as one more frustration in 8 long years of frustrations.

The program may be a victim of its own success. We are unsure as to whether it was the lack of funds or an application overload, or both, that caused the suspension. We ask that the program be resumed as soon as possible, and that it be properly funded.

We thank you for your support of our servicemembers and their families. We urge you to remember their service as you work to resolve the many issues facing our country. Working together, we can improve the quality of life for all these families.

Thank you, and I await your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Moakler follows:]

Senator WEBB. Thank you very much.

Mr. Cline.

STATEMENT OF MASTER SERGEANT MICHAEL CLINE, USA (RET.), EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ENLISTED ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Chairman, we thank you, on behalf of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States and the Military Coalition, for holding these hearings.

Mr. Chairman, over 142,000 National Guard and Reserve servicemembers and women are serving on active duty. Since September 11, 2001, more than 752,000 of our citizens, soldiers, and airmen, sailors and marines, Guard and Reserve service men, have been called up, including well over 200,000 who have served multiple tours.

With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to cut out the fluff and just get to the point of the needs of our Guard and Reserve people and their families.

The next step in modernizing the Reserve retirement system is to provide equal retirement age reduction credit for all activated service rendered since September 11, 2001. The current law that credits only active service since January 28, 2008, disenfranchises and devalues the service of hundreds of thousands of Guard and Reserve members who have served combat tours, many with multiple combat tours since 2001 and 2008.

The statute also must be amended to eliminate the inequity inherited in the current fiscal year retirement calculation, which only credits 90 days of active service for early retirement purposes if it occurs within the same fiscal year. The current rule significantly penalizes members who deploy in July or August, versus those deploying earlier in the fiscal year. It is patently unfair, as the current law requires giving 3 months retirement-age credit for 90-days tours served from January through March, but only half credit for 120-day tours served from August through November, because the latter covers 60 days in each of the 2 fiscal years.

Mr. Chairman, we fully understand the budgetary problems facing our country, but we're also aware that more than \$700 billion was given to banks, financial institutions, automakers; \$3 billion for Cash for Clunkers was spent, in 3 weeks, that did nothing more than reduce the inventory of autodealers; the American people, many of which are the very veterans who have been passed by, are looking at a trillion-dollar healthcare bill. If CBO figures are accurate, it will cost \$2.1 billion over 10 years, or just about \$21 million a year, to provide retroactivity for early retirement for those who have protected our freedom. It's the right thing to do to honor the unselfish heroes and their families who have given up so much to protect us and our way of life.

For the near term, we place particular priority on authorizing early retirement credit for all qualifying post-September 11 Active Duty service performed by Guard and reservist members, and eliminating the fiscal-year-specific accumulator that bars equal credit for members deploying for equal periods during different months of the year. Ultimately, we believe we must move forward to provide a reduced-age entitlement for retired pay and health coverage for all Reserve-component members that is an age-service formula or outright eligibility, if otherwise qualified, at age 55.

Further, we urge repeal of the annual cap of 130 days of inactive duty points that may be credited towards a Reserve retirement.

Yellow Ribbon. We urge the subcommittee to hold oversight hearings and to direct additional improvements in coordination and collaboration and consistency of the—of Yellow Ribbon services. DOD must ensure that State-leveled best practices, such as those in Maryland, Minnesota, and New Hampshire, are applied for all operational Reserve Force members and their families, and that Federal Reserve veterans have equal access to services and support available to National Guard veterans. Community groups, employers, and service organizations' efforts need to be encouraged and better coordinated to supplement unit, component, service, and VA outreach and service.

The Guard and Reserve GI Bill. We are grateful to you, in Congress, for inclusion of a critical “earn as you serve” principle, in the post-September 11 GI Bill, which allows operational reservists to accumulate additional benefits for each aggregate call-up of 90 days or more on Active Duty. However, Active Duty members of the National Guard serving under Title 32 orders were not included in the new program, despite their critical role in homeland defense, counterdrug, border control, and other missions. We urge this subcommittee to work with Veterans Affairs Committee to include Title 32 AGRs in the post-September 11 statute.

TMC's longstanding recommendation of coordinating and integrating various educational benefit programs has been made more challenging with the post-September 11 GI Bill. For example, benefits for initially joining the Guard and Reserve, as authorized under Chapter 1606 of title 10, continue to decline in proportion to the Active Duty Montgomery GI Bill, Chapter 30, title 38, in the new post-September 11 GI Bill. Reserve MGIB benefit levels have slipped to 24 percent of the Active Duty MGIB benefit, compared to 47 to 50 percent during the first 15 years of the program. Restoration of the original ratio would raise basic Reserve rates from the current \$333 a month to \$643 to \$684 a month for full-time duty. TMC maintains that restoring the ratio is not only a matter of equity, but essential to long-time success of the Guard and Reserve recruiting program.

Guard and Reserve healthcare—continuing of healthcare insurance options for the Guard and Reserve. The Coalition is very grateful for the passage of TRICARE Reserve Retirement; however, we're very disappointed that it's going to take DOD 18 months to implement the new program. And as we have sent letters to you, we ask that you intervene with DOD to speed this program up. It's a benefit—

Senator GRAHAM. Absolutely.

Mr. CLINE.—that is needed.

Senator GRAHAM. Absolutely.

Mr. CLINE. When we look at the TRICARE Reserve Select Program, a disturbing fact is that only 6 to 7 percent of our eligible beneficiaries are taking advantage of the TRICARE Reserve Select Program. DOD and the Services and the Reserve components must do more to advertise the TRS program.

The Coalition also believes that Congress is missing an opportunity to reduce long-term healthcare costs and increase beneficiary satisfaction by authorizing eligible members the option of electing a DOD subsidy of their civilian insurance during periods of activation. Current law already authorizes payment of up to 24 months of FEHBP premiums for activated members who are civilian employees of the Defense Department. Over the long term, the Guard and Reserve activations can be expected at a reduced pace. This option would offer considerable savings opportunities, relative to DOD permanent, year-round TRICARE.

We recommend to the subcommittee—require a GAO review of DOD’s methodology for determining TRS costs for premium adjustment purposes to assess whether it includes any costs of maintaining readiness or “costs of doing business” for the Department of Defense that don’t contribute to beneficiary benefit values, and thus excluded from cost premium calculations.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to any questions that you or Senator Graham may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Cline follows:]

Senator WEBB. Thank you very much.

Ms. Holleman.

**STATEMENT OF DEIRDRE PARKE HOLLEMAN, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR, THE RETIRED ENLISTED ASSOCIATION**

Ms. HOLLEMAN. Good morning. Mr. Chairman—

Senator WEBB. Good afternoon, actually. [Laughter.]

Ms. HOLLEMAN. Good afternoon.

Senator GRAHAM. My stomach says it’s afternoon.

Ms. HOLLEMAN. Life goes quickly, right?

It is an honor to speak to you today about the Military Coalition’s legislative goals concerning military retirees and military survivors. I know you will not be surprised that TMC is urging you to, once and for all, end the unfair offset of military retired pay by VA disability pay.

We are grateful for the great strides that have been made in ending this practice, which we all now acknowledge is terribly unfair. But, there are two groups of valiant retirees who are not getting the relief that you ordered for the others. One group is those longevity retirees with VA disabilities of 10 to 40 percent. The other group is those servicemembers who were forced to medically retire with less than 20 years, due to an injury or medical condition that is not deemed combat-related under the CRSC program. Even in these tough economic times, simple fairness should call for the end of the offset for all. But, even more dramatically, the President, for the second year, has proposed, in his budget, to end the offset for medical retirees. To have the administration propose a change that, in the past, was the goal of only you, in Congress, is a historic op-

portunity. We strongly urge you to join the President in this laudable goal and end the offset for medical retirees now.

It is also clearly time to finally end the SBP/DIC offset. SBP, as of course you know, is an employee benefit, while DIC is an indemnity program for survivors of those who died because of their service in the military. The present practice of taking a dollar from a survivor's SBP payment for every dollar paid by the VA's DIC program is unfair and illogical. Legislation to end this offset is pending in both Houses of Congress. Now that Senator Bill Nelson's S. 535 has 55 cosponsors, and Representative Ortiz's H.R. 811 has 319 cosponsors, it is clear that a majority of the Members of Congress agree that this offset should end. And it should end now, while our servicemembers are fighting in two wars and at risk throughout the world.

While these two issues are of great and continuing concern to all of the members of the Coalition, there are several additional matters that we believe are critically important. We urge you to support Senator Blanche Lincoln's soon-to-be-introduced legislation that will be a companion bill to Representative Walter Jones's H.R. 613. Their Military Retirees Survivor Comfort Acts would authorize the retention of the full month's retired pay of the last month of a retiree's life by his or her surviving spouse. Presently, DFAS removed the month's retired pay from the retiree account, calculates how much is owed by how many days the retiree lived in the month that he or she died in, and then returns the prorated share to the survivor. This method can cause confusion and even bounce checks during a tremendously tense and sorrowful time. Senator Lincoln's bill would stop this, and treat military retiree survivors the same way as disabled veteran survivors are treated concerning the disability payments.

The Uniformed Services Former Spouse Protection Act desperately needs improvement. While some organizations want dramatic fundamental changes, and other groups adamantly do not, it is—it truly is time that we had a hearing on this rather explosive issue. And there are already several improvements that DOD has supported, for years, that could be made during this session. These changes include basing the amount awarded in a divorce on the grade and years of service at the time of the divorce, rather than at the time of retirement, and prohibiting the inclusion of imputed income in a divorce property award, which often forces Active Duty members into retirement. A full list of our suggestions can be found in our written testimony.

Finally, we urge that DFAS be allowed to make SBP payments into a Special Needs Trust. Presently, they may only pay SBP to a person. This means that a permanently disabled survivor cannot make use of this State-created legal device that allows a disabled person to protect their eligibility for SSI, Medicaid, and State means-tested programs. With the help of supporters like you, Chairman Webb, we hope that this change will be made. It would only affect a few people, but for those survivors, this small change would be an enormous help.

Thank you for your time, and may I have the honor to introduce Colonel Strobridge. [The prepared statement of Ms. Holleman follows:]

Senator WEBB. Thank you very much for your testimony.
Colonel Strobridge.

STATEMENT OF STEVEN P. STROBRIDGE, USAF (RET.), DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Mr. Chairman, Senator Graham, my testimony is going to focus on healthcare and Wounded Warrior issues.

The primary issue for all beneficiaries is access. And the primary threat to access continues to be the perpetual threat of major cuts in Medicare and TRICARE payments to doctors. We fully realize that's beyond the authority of this subcommittee, but it is the number-one healthcare issue among our beneficiaries.

On national healthcare reform, the principal issues for our members in the coalition are ensuring protection of military-unique health benefits, including TRICARE For Life, and protection of uniformed services beneficiaries from taxation on the value of those benefits.

On TRICARE fees, we're grateful that the administration has not proposed any increases for fiscal year 2011, however, without congressional action, the TRICARE standard outpatient deductible will be increased administratively by more than \$110 per day as of October 1. Last October, the subcommittee acted, during conference action on the National Defense Authorization Act, to stop that change. We urge you to put a provision in law, capping the outpatient deductible at the current \$535 per day, which the coalition believes is plenty high enough and should not be increased for the foreseeable future.

We also ask you to put a "Sense of Congress" provision in the National Defense Authorization Act, as the Senate approved last year, highlighting the importance of military health benefits and offsetting the adverse conditions of service and recognizing that military people pay large up-front premiums through decades of service and sacrifice, over and above their cash fees.

On Wounded Warriors, we're concerned that the change of the administration has left many senior positions vacant for more than a year, and that close joint oversight previously provided by top leaders has been delegated and diffused back along agency-centric lines. The coalition is particularly concerned that the diminution of the Senior Oversight Committee, or SOC, has weakened day-to-day oversight of, and priority on, joint agency operations and management. We urge revitalization of the SOC, or a similar joint agency staffed with senior officials with full-time primary oversight responsibility for seamless transition initiatives.

Similarly, the transition from Active Duty to retiree care or to VA coverage still catches many wounded warriors and their families unaware. They need the same protections that we provide when someone dies on Active Duty: 3 years of continued Active Duty-level coverage to ensure a smooth transition to the next phase of their life.

We appreciate the subcommittee's efforts last year to provide caregiver benefits on a par with what's provided by the VA. The Veterans Affairs Committees are now finalizing significant up-

grades for caregivers, and we hope you'll act to reestablish comparability of DOD programs once that happens.

Regarding psychological health, PTSD, and TBI, we know the subcommittee and DOD and the services are pursuing a wide range of initiatives to enhance access to care and counseling, and to remove the stigma from seeking care. Unfortunately, some facets of the military environment continue to undermine those efforts. In that regard, many who suffer after-effects of combat continue being barred from reenlistment, or separated for other reasons, because service disciplinary and administrative systems are much less flexible and resilient than we're asking military people to be. We hope the subcommittee will continue its efforts to protect returnees from these lower profile, but still devastating, secondary effects of war.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my remarks.

[The prepared statement of Colonel Strobbridge follows:]

Senator WEBB. Thank you very much.

I want to thank all of you for your testimony. The feedback is important to us. It's useful. It's not only useful, it's valuable. It will be taken into full consideration.

I—there are a dozen really important points that were raised, from my perspective, listening to your testimony.

TRICARE will not be affected, as long as I have anything to do with it. And I know Senator Graham feels the same way. I've seen the benefits in my own family, I've seen it with my mother right now.

When you talk about the—when you mention the SBP situation, my father paid into SBP for 28 years. And when he died in 1997, they took it out of my mother's Social Security. Luckily, we had that situation fixed, but we will give the situation you mentioned a hard look. I'm on Senator Bill Nelson's bill.

With respect to commissary benefits, I—as you know, I grew up in the military. I used to work in a commissary, actually; I was a bagboy for 2 and a half years when I was in high school. [Laughter.]

But, I've always looked at commissary benefits in the same way that we articulate the healthcare benefits to people. It's—the idea of being able to go to the commissary after you retire is something that people count on while they're in the military. And that's something we don't think about, I think, as much as we need to up here.

Your comment, Ms. Moakler, about family difficulties and the need to get on top of that—you know, there was a period in my life when my dad was either deployed or stationed where there was no family housing, for 3 and a half years. And we had no structure in—at that period. We were—this idea of the family as a part of the operational military was not even in its infancy at the time.

I also recall when I was in the Marine Corps and I got back from Vietnam, in Quantico—they did a study of the Quantico school system, and I think the statistic at the time was that the kids in the Quantico school system—the high school—had three times the level of emotional difficulties as the National level at the time, because of the intensity of the Vietnam War. About 100,000 killed or wounded in the United States Marine Corps. People forget that. We had more total killed or wounded in Vietnam than we did in World War II, in the Marine Corps. And the stress of these 13-

month deployments on the Marines, and wondering where your—you know, what your dad was doing, and, at that time, he could be dead. Enormous impact.

I really salute you for bringing the issue to us the way that you did today.

I had one question, quickly. I know we're way behind schedule here, and I know Senator Graham wants to also participate here. But, there's a lot of experience at the—in this panel—military experience. I am really puzzled when I keep hearing the statistic that two-thirds of the—your phraseology was “optimally-aged potential enlistees” are not qualifying, and that defies historical trends. It's—if you go back, for instance, to the Vietnam era, which I've done a lot of study on, obviously, over my life—one-third of the entire age group served—9 million out of 27 million actually served. And we're now saying that only one-third of an age group could even qualify to serve. What are your thoughts on that? Is this the standards not fitting the potential? Or is the physical and mental capabilities different? Where do we get this—and what could we do about it?

Mr. BARNES. Mr. Chairman, I'll speak to that first. Those statistics are from recruiting—Navy Recruiting Command—

Senator WEBB. Yes, I've actually heard them in other hearings, so—

Mr. BARNES. Exactly. And I think there are a number of facets associated with that. Number one, it's the All-Volunteer Force, which has obviously been up and functioning since the early 1970s. The requirements that—the service requirements across the services as to what the expectations are with regard to them; social issues, with practices and whatever, that are not conducive or not compatible with the requirements; perhaps drug use or other things that are happening.

So, it's a multifaceted issue. It's very troubling to our Association. We have a number of recognition programs, work very closely with Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard recruiting communities, but it's—I share your concern about that. And it's kind of a staggering statistic, but it's held consistent for several years, now.

Senator WEBB. Does anyone else have any thoughts on that?

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Yes, sir. I attended a briefing by Dr. Curt Gilroy recently, the DOD Director of Accession Policy. And I think one of the things he emphasized is—and, as a matter of fact, he—the number he gave was, only 25 percent qualify. One of the changes, I think, is obesity. You know, the—we have a significantly larger number of people who are overweight today than we did in the past. Another thing is, kind of, the incongruity, perhaps, in some of the drug issues. If you report to Basic Training and say you experimented once with marijuana, they'll let you stay, but if you had a conviction for possession of a marijuana cigarette when you were 18, you can't come in. So, there is a variety of things like that, I think.

Ms. MOAKLER. I think we also need to look at the converse of that. And you have an example of this, Chairman Webb, as do I. I'm the mother of two soldiers. And it behooves us to keep our promises to our families so that our children see that the military

lifestyle is a rewarding one. We're also—we're already teaching them self-sacrifice. And so, many of our children are eligible, because they see that physical fitness is an important part of everyday life, because they are discouraged from using drugs, and because they seek that life of selfless service. So, that's just another aspect to look on it, as well.

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Chairman, we have similar problems in the Guard and Reserve. Standards today in the Guard and Reserve are much higher—back in the day when I joined. You know, the education requirements, the drug problems are just higher today than they are.

And we're living in a day of fast food, as Colonel Strobidge mentioned. Overweight problems. You know, we're constantly weeding out people who cannot meet the physical fitness requirements.

Senator WEBB. I know Senator Graham has to go, and he wanted to—

Senator GRAHAM. Well, one, we've been doing this together for several years now, and you all really do a good job of making the case for benefit increases and, you know, inequities. And that's what your job is. And our job is to listen and try to meet as many needs as we can, understanding we can't be everything to everybody all the time, because of budget problems.

The thing about TRICARE—I was—want to just let Senator Webb know that—you know, working with Senator Clinton and others, we're able to make the Guard and Reserve Force eligible for TRICARE, year round. The belief is that 25 percent did not have healthcare in the private sector; it gives them a healthcare home. It will allow them to have healthcare throughout their military service, which is an incentive to stay in.

And I'm very disheartened by the numbers you gave me. And we're going to do everything we can on this subcommittee to let people know, this benefit is there, you've earned it; it's a good deal, compared to the private sector; and try to get people to take more advantage of it. So, I promise you—18 months is too long, so we're going to start—about the other problem you mentioned, about 18 months to implement the GI stuff, benefits.

So, this really helps us understand how these programs actually work. Because when I go around talking about them, I'm very proud of it, but only 6 or 7 percent of the force is joining up, there's a disconnect. And you all are really fair arbitrators of that.

One thing I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, is that this country has got to come to grips with Medicare and Social Security and entitlement programs that have no end in sight and beginning to eat up the budgets of everything else we do. The same is true for military healthcare. You know, we haven't had a premium increase since 1995. I understand that what the past administration tried to do was just too much, too quick. I mean, it's just—couple hundred percent. And lowering the deductible from, like 500 or whatever it is, to 100 is just kind of a—just pretty rapid change that hits the wallet pretty hard.

But, I would suggest that we try to work with these groups. And you all have done a—remember when we had that big meeting a couple years ago? How could you lower the cost of military healthcare? How could you improve access and quality? What

things could we put on the table, that are preventive, that would allow the military member and their family to get better treatment, but actually lower cost?

I think it would be—probably behoove us to look at that again, before we ask for more money; to really go into this system and see, Is it serving, an optimal level, the beneficiaries? Are we doing preventive medicine things that will lower costs and improve quality of life? But also understand one word: sustainability. None of these programs are going to be sustainable if we don't do something about that. And that's what I would like to have this subcommittee look at, if we could, a way to get sustainable medical healthcare benefits for the retired force, the active and Guard force, and their families, so you can recruit and retain, but not have the dilemma of taking money away from a budget where you also are going to need to fight the war and buy equipment.

That's the challenge of our lifetime, quite frankly, and you and your organization that you represent can really be helpful here.

Mr. Chairman, thank you. You—obviously—

Senator WEBB. Well said.

Senator GRAHAM. Just listening to you—I mean, you have so many experiences. I mean, you—I don't know how you got through school. [Laughter.]

I mean, changing schools that many times. Can you imagine the stress on that? I didn't know that. I didn't know that more Marines were killed in Vietnam, and wounded, than World War II.

Senator WEBB. More total casualties—

Senator GRAHAM. I did not know that, so—

Senator WEBB.—killed in World War II, more total casualties.

Senator GRAHAM. You have lived the life that these people are talking about, from personal and from your parents' point of view, and let's take that knowledge and put it to good use.

Senator WEBB. It's a pleasure to be working with you, Senator Graham, and I take all your points on track.

I want to make one 30-second point here, just to wrap up this question I had about percentage of people who might be able to come in.

I think we undervalue what we can get out of people who haven't yet finished high school, who fall out of the system, who can come into the military. I've seen too many success stories from the Marine Corps with—we have about the same percentage of people now who aren't finishing high school as did when I was in the Marine Corps. We took them, some of my best friends, some of my close friends in my life, people like Carlton Sherwood, high school dropout, three Purple Hearts in Vietnam, became a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter. Walter Anderson, CEO of Parade Magazine, Parade Enterprises, high school dropout, went in the Marine Corps, came back, and was valedictorian of his college class.

I mean, there—there's a pool of people out there who, with the—if you take their mental scores, the capability they have, who are looking for structure in their life, and can come in and really add value to our society. And maybe we ought to take that piece and look at it and talk to DOD about it, if we want to increase this pool.

It's been a great discussion; and Senator Graham, it's a pleasure working with you.
Thank you all.
[Whereupon, at 12:41 p.m., the subcommittee adjourned.]