

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Mr. Timothy Dill
Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs

Duties and Qualifications

1. What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (ASD(M&RA))?

The ASW(M&RA) serves as the principal advisor to the Secretary of War and the Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness (USW(P&R)) on military and civilian personnel policies, reserve integration, and military community and family policy. The ASW(M&RA) also oversees, on behalf of the USW(P&R), the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) and Defense Commissary agency (DeCA), organizations that provide vital support to Service members and their families.

2. What background and experience do you have that qualify you for this position?

My experiences over the past two decades have prepared me to serve in this critical role on behalf our men and women in uniform and Department civilian employees.

I was commissioned as an Army officer through the University of Central Florida Army ROTC program. I served on active duty for ten years, first in the 82nd Airborne Division, then in 3rd Special Forces Group after earning my Green Beret. During those ten years I led Soldiers on deployments to Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, and Mauritania, and served at the U.S. Embassy in Nigeria as a Special Operations Forces Liaison. I then served in the Army Reserve while using the GI Bill to earn a JD/MBA dual degree at Duke University.

After practicing national security law at a large law firm in Washington, DC, I joined Senator Cruz's staff in the U.S. Senate, serving as Sen. Cruz's Military Legislative Assistant and National Security Advisor. In those roles I managed his defense, veterans, and foreign policy portfolios, drafting and managing Sen. Cruz's National Defense Authorization Act-related legislation, meeting with nominees, and frequently visiting military installations across the United States. On behalf of Sen. Cruz, I also met with numerous families and organizations who advocate for Service members and veteran, ensuring their voices were heard.

In January 2025 President Trump appointed me to a role in the Department of War, where I have served in multiple Pentagon offices, including the Office of the Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, and the Department of the Navy Office of General Counsel. Those opportunities have allowed me to work daily with numerous

talented Service members and Department civilians and to better understand the personnel-related challenges the Department faces.

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

I believe that civilian control of the armed forces is crucial to preserving the success of our Nation's system of government. If confirmed as a senior civilian leader in the Department, I will faithfully maintain that important principle on behalf of and in service to the American people.

Major Challenges and Priorities

4. In your view, what are the major challenges confronting the ASD(M&RA), and how would you address them, if confirmed?

The OASW(M&RA) faces numerous challenges, including sustaining current military recruiting and retention success, ensuring an excellent quality of life for Service members and their families, and optimizing the Department's civilian workforce.

The Military Departments and their Military Services have had great success recruiting in fiscal year (FY) 2025 and current retention numbers are strong. However, the greater backdrop is that young Americans have a declining propensity to serve and are often ineligible to do so. If confirmed, I will focus on effectively conveying the call to service and ensuring enlistment standards are appropriate. Once young Americans have committed to serve, we must retain the best among them to become the next generation of military leaders. I would also focus on offering the right incentives and career pathways to ensure they want to continue in uniform.

Retention is also about families. Providing a good quality of life increases the likelihood that military families will support their Service members' continued service. Some of the ways we can do that are limiting the frequency with which Service members and their families conduct permanent change of station moves; providing access to affordable childcare, healthy food, quality education, and safe and affordable housing; and supporting meaningful employment for military spouses.

The Department's civilian workforce is also a key driver of mission success, and if confirmed I will work with Department components to streamline the hiring process, place people in roles where they can make the greatest contribution, evaluate performance predictably and fairly, and reward success.

Conflicts of Interest

Federal ethics laws, to include 18 U.S.C. §208, prohibit government employees from participating in matters in which they, or certain family members or

organizations with which they have certain relationships, have a financial interest.

- 5. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to disclose any potential conflicts of interest, including investments, business ties, family relationships, or other connections that could be perceived as influencing your decision making?**

I agree to comply with all conflicts of interest disclosure requirements set forth in the Ethics in Government Act and implementing regulations.

- 6. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, that if a conflict of interest arises, you will recuse yourself from participating in any decisions regarding that specific matter?**

I agree to comply with all recusal requirements under 18 U.S.C. § 208 and implementing regulations.

- 7. Do you commit, without qualification, if confirmed, to make decisions on the merits, and exclusively in the public interest, without regard to private gain or personal benefit?**

I commit to deciding matters on the merits based on the public interest, without regard to any private gain or personal benefit.

Personnel Policy Implementation

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

If confirmed, I will carefully examine the Department's current human resources management practices, identify needed reforms, and implement them across the enterprise. My focus would include ensuring we effectively message the opportunities to serve that the Department provides, offer the right incentives while being a good steward of taxpayer resources, evaluate fairly and predictably, and reward success through recognition, assignments of greater responsibility, and financial compensation. The Department must effectively compete with the private sector, and to do so, its policies must not be overly rigid or bureaucratic.

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

My legal education and experience as an attorney deepened my respect for the law, and serving as a national security staff member for a U.S. Senator enhanced my understanding and appreciation of the critical role that Congress, and specifically the

Senate Armed Services Committee, plays in legislating and overseeing military policy and execution. If confirmed, I will comply with policies directed by law, inform Congress and the Committees of implementation progress, and consult with Congress regarding any statutorily required policies that can be improved to ensure our Nation's military restore the warrior ethos and effectively deters our Nation's adversaries.

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

As an attorney and former staff member for a U.S. Senator, I am familiar with implementation timelines for statutorily required policies and how they are provided in a variety of formats within the statutory language, including specified dates of suspense, prescribed number of days from enactment of the law in question, or milestone-oriented deadlines. If confirmed, it will always be my goal to meet Congressionally mandated time periods to implement personnel policies prescribed in law. Where that may not be feasible, I would commit to work with Congress to develop time periods that ensure we are responsive to the intent of Congress while also judiciously and effectively implementing the prescribed policies.

11. According to the "Fork in the Road" memo from the Office of Personnel Management, "Employees will be subject to enhanced standards of suitability and conduct as we move forward," but no further guidance has been issued on what that means. What is your understanding of the current definition of "suitability" being used by DOD, the process for those suitability determinations, and how that might change?

The Department is focused on ensuring that its mission-critical civilian workforce consists of employees who are highly qualified, highly motivated, intentionally placed to align with the Secretary's highest priorities, and incentivized to produce excellent results on behalf of the American people.

Readiness of the Armed Forces

12. What is your assessment of how effectively the Department of Defense and the armed forces measure and track readiness?

It is my understanding that the Department has highly effective systems of policies and technology in place to measure and track the readiness of our armed forces. I am also aware that the readiness reporting systems are continuously evolving and improving. If confirmed, I will work closely with partners throughout the Department to ensure readiness assessments are informed by timely, accurate, and relevant data, enabling sound decisions and policies impacting Service members and their families.

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

I believe our military is the most ready, lethal fighting force in the world, and our people are the foundation of that readiness. If confirmed, I will work closely with my colleagues across the Department to ensure the Total Force is ready to deter and defeat any threat posed by our adversaries through combat-credible deterrence during peacetime and effective warfighting in conflict. As the Secretary Hegseth has stated, the Department is the strength referenced in the phrase “Peace through Strength.”

14. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to improve personnel readiness, including the medical readiness of the force?

I firmly hold to the Special Operations Forces truth that “Humans are more important than hardware.” Ensuring personnel readiness, including medical readiness, is critical to the effectiveness of our armed forces. If confirmed, I will closely collaborate with the Assistant Secretary of War for Readiness (ASW(R)) and the Assistant Secretary of War for Health Affairs (ASW(HA)) to support their efforts in this critical area. If confirmed, my focus as ASW(M&RA) will be on strengthening the personnel systems that underpin readiness, including as recruiting, training, and retention, and ensuring they are aligned with the readiness and health goals established by the ASW(R) and ASW(HA).

15. If confirmed, what changes would you implement to ensure the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness more directly and effectively tracks readiness across the force?

Tracking readiness levels across the entire force is a critical aspect of the Department’s ability to provide national leadership with credible military options. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with the ASW(R) to evaluate policies through the mutually beneficial lens of readiness assessments and tools, in line with President Trump’s guidance and Secretary Hegseth’s direction.

Non-Deployable Service members

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

To maximize lethality and readiness of the Force, Department policy requires all Service members to be deployable, with rare exceptions. I believe that Service members non-deployable for over 12 consecutive months must be evaluated for further retention in service. If confirmed, I will review the Department’s current policy on non-deployability to ensure it meets Secretary Hegseth’s intent to restore our military’s warrior ethos.

17. Under what circumstances do you believe the retention of a service member who has been non-deployable for more than 12 months would be “in the best interest of the service”?

I believe military services should carefully consider the extended non-deployable status of Service members in light of the Department’s critical priorities, including any critical workforce shortages, and examine the potential for a timely return to deployable status and any potential adverse impacts to a Service member that continued service might present.

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

Addressing medical non-deployability within the Reserve Components is a critical readiness imperative. To my understanding, medical readiness in the Reserve Component has been a perennial challenge. If confirmed, I will examine opportunities to address this challenge, including improved data sharing and targeted support to select military occupational specialties or regions with limited access to health care.

Senior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (SROTC)

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

SROTC units at colleges and universities are a valuable pipeline for producing future military leaders, and taxpayer funds available to sustain those programs should be invested where they yield the greatest return. If confirmed, I will carefully examine the military services’ current SROTC program assessment methodology and work with the Military Departments to ensure that any termination decisions are based on the Department’s needs and stewardship of taxpayer resources.

20. If confirmed, how would you modify the SROTC scholarship program to attract the top talent that our armed forces need to meet national defense?

If confirmed, I will work with the Military Departments to better understand the current SROTC scholarship program and pursue any needed changes to ensure that those funds appropriately incentivize superlative young Americans to pursue commissions as military officers through SROTC.

Military Compensation

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

Yes. A competitive military pay and benefits package, first and foremost, enables the Department to recruit and retain a force capable of deterring our adversaries, and when necessary, defeating our enemies.

22. The 14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, released in January 2025, concluded that the current military compensation package is strongly competitive with the civilian labor market. What is your assessment of the current military pay package and its adequacy in recruiting and retaining servicemembers?

I agree with the 14th QRMC's conclusion that the current military compensation package exceeds its benchmarks with respect to the civilian labor market, and the Department's current recruiting and retention success reinforces that conclusion. The Department must remain vigilant in ensuring that the compensation package is competitive with the dynamic civilian labor market.

23. In recent years, Congress has enacted substantial pay increases for junior enlisted servicemembers, culminating in a 14.5 percent increase in basic pay for grades E-1 to E-4 and a 4.5 percent across-the-board annual pay increase for the rest of the military for fiscal year 2025. What additional changes, if any, would you recommend to the current military pay and benefits package, if confirmed?

If confirmed, I will carefully evaluate the results of Congress' recent substantial pay increases for Service members and recommend any changes needed to sustain the effectiveness of our all-volunteer force, including targeted and non-monetary incentives.

24. What specific recommendations do you have for balancing rising military personnel costs with other defense spending priorities, such as procurement and modernization?

I believe the Department's critical funding priorities, including personnel, procurement, and modernization, form capacity in concert and should not be viewed in isolation. An increase in total military personnel costs as a percentage of the Department's budget may constrain the Department's ability to effectively train and equip those Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Guardians. If confirmed, I will carefully examine any projected cost increases and provide Department senior leaders with prioritized spending recommendations to ensure balance across the force.

Recruiting and Retention

The 2024 Commission on the National Defense Strategy concluded that “The DoD workforce and the all-volunteer force provide an unmatched advantage. However, recruiting failures have shrunk the force and raise serious questions about the all-volunteer force in peacetime, let alone in major combat.” In addition, DOD studies indicate that only about 23% of today’s youth population is eligible for military service, and only a fraction of those who meet military accession standards are interested in serving.

- 25. In your view, what are the main reasons that less than a quarter of 17 to 24-year-olds are eligible for military service, and how would you propose increasing the size of that pool without degrading the quality of recruits?**

It is my understanding that obesity renders a significant number of young Americans ineligible for military service, while other physical conditions, mental health issues, vocational aptitude, and criminal history are also significant factors. If confirmed, I would examine ways to increase early engagement with young people before they make decisions that will increase or decrease their likelihood of future eligibility for military service. I would also review the results of the current Future Servicemember Prep Courses, which seek to assist recruits in meeting physical or scholastic eligibility requirements.

- 26. If required to choose between maintaining high recruitment and retention standards and achieving authorized end strength levels, which would be more important, in your view?**

My years in the Army Infantry and Special Forces communities demonstrated the impact of high standards, which inspired me and many of my peers to better ourselves in pursuit of challenging training opportunities, career fields and unit assignments, and continue to do so today. No one dreams of joining a sub-par organization.

The military must maintain appropriately high standards predicated on mission requirements. Diluting those standards poses a risk both to unqualified Service members and to the comrades who must rely on them in combat and thus poses a risk to mission.

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

I believe there are multiple contributing factors to the present declining propensity to serve. One is that few young people today have meaningful connections with Service members or veterans, making them less likely to understand the military, its many job fields, and the benefits of service. Another is that, with time, we as a nation grow increasingly removed from the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, a galvanizing national tragedy that inspired many, including me and many of my fellow Soldiers, to pursue military service.

28. What impact do current medical and other qualifications for enlistment in the military have on the number of individuals eligible for military service?

Enlistment standards predicated on the demands of military service rightly narrow the pool of individuals eligible for military service and must be closely examined to ensure they are appropriately high and never arbitrary. Every well-qualified young American should have the opportunity to serve, and no one who is unable to succeed in the military should enter.

29. Rather than relying solely on ever-higher compensation for a shrinking pool of volunteers, what creative steps would you take, if confirmed, to expand the pool of eligible recruits and improve military recruiting?

I believe the efficacy of monetary incentives as a recruiting tool lessens beyond the threshold required to provide a reasonable quality of life. Beyond that point, the question of whether a young person chooses to serve increasingly hinges on whether they find the idea of military service compelling, as they have numerous private-sector alternatives.

If confirmed, I will focus on the Department's efforts to more effectively convey the intangible value propositions of military service, including the deep sense of purpose and camaraderie it offers, as well as the ways it prepares a young person to succeed in future pursuits.

30. What steps, if any, should be taken to ensure that current operational requirements and tempo do not adversely impact the overall recruiting, retention, readiness, and morale of servicemembers?

The military must first and foremost meet operational requirements on behalf of the United States. When the scale and tempo of those requirements is challenging, there is inevitably pressure on the appeal of military service and an impact on the morale of those serving.

The Department must clearly signal to Congress the resources needed to man, train, and equip a force capable of sustaining current and emerging requirements. To assist in doing so effectively, if confirmed I would monitor key factors, such as recruiting and retention numbers, work closely with my colleagues in the OASW(R) in evaluating relevant readiness indicators, and engage frequently with Service members and their families at all echelons to accurately gauge morale and overall sentiment. Military family sentiment is a particularly telling statistic, as military spouse satisfaction with their family's experience is highly correlated with Service member retention decisions.

31. Several Services have reported record high retention rates to Congress in the last year. While this helps to offset recruiting challenges, how will you ensure the

military services' retention efforts are not only meeting end strength goals, but also ensuring retained personnel possess the right skills, experience, and readiness to meet future operational demands?

If confirmed, I will work with the military departments to ensure that retention policies, including incentives, target the Service members best qualified to address future operational demands. Strong retention demand gives the Department the ability to be increasingly selective.

Transition Assistance Program

32. In your view, how effective has Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Department of Labor collaboration been to date, and what would you do to enhance it?

While I believe there is room for improvement in the collaboration between those three organizations, efforts to ensure TAP program elements are continuously benefiting our Service members have been successful. I believe that TAP is best aligned with the Department of War to ensure preservation of operational priorities governing active duty Service member requirements while collaborating with and supported by the VA and other federal agencies for TAP execution. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing this work with the VA and the Department of Labor.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 significantly reformed the Transition Assistance Program to provide a more individualized and tailored experience for servicemembers. The program is no longer one-size fits all.

33. Since these changes have been implemented, what is your view of the effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), and how might it be improved?

I completed TAP in 2017 as I exited active duty, and I appreciate Congressional support for improving TAP's value for Service members. Approximately 200,000 Service members complete TAP each year, making personalized attention a challenge. Generally, I understand that veterans' post-service employment outcomes compare favorably to the broader population. If confirmed, I will work with the Military Departments to better understand TAP's role in achieving that effectiveness and how it may better address the needs of Service members transitioning to civilian life. I will also work to ensure that TAP's timeline and requirements support Service members' goals rather than conflict with their existing transition planning.

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

With support from Congress, TAP has become a robust program with alternate pathways and multiple levels of assistance, giving Service members control of their transition process and aligning with their individual post-transition goals. If confirmed, I will work to better understand the extent to which the current TAP model fits the needs of transitioning reservists. As reservists are often positioned differently than their active-duty counterparts, including being likely to already hold civilian employment, the scope of their TAP requirements should best reflect their needs.

Suicide Prevention

In 2023, the Department of Defense released the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee (SPRIRC) report which included recommendations to the Department to improve quality of life, aid in building healthy climates and cultures, and better address stigma as a barrier to help-seeking, amongst other things.

35. If confirmed, what matters, if any, raised by the SPRIRC report will you continue to prioritize?

Maintaining the resilience and readiness of our Total Force is absolutely critical and suicide prevention remains a strategic imperative. If confirmed, I will continue to support the implementation of the Department's published action plan related to the SPRIRC recommendations. I fully support actions to improve the delivery of mental health care and address the stigma that can prevent service members from seeking care when needed. As recommended by the SPRIRC, this includes expanding vital telehealth mental health services, strengthening case management, and integrating mental health care into primary care settings. These are practical, impactful steps to ensure our Service members have the resources they need.

36. If confirmed, what additional efforts would you undertake to strengthen the Department's suicide prevention programs to reduce the number of suicides among service members, including in the reserve components, and their families?

If confirmed, I will continue efforts to implement the action items informed by the work of the SPRIRC. To accomplish this, I will ensure that leaders at all levels can recognize risk and support our Service members. I will work to connect Service members with the right prevention resources, ensuring those at risk get the right services. This care is available from military treatment facilities, embedded mental health providers, non-medical counselors, and the Corps of military chaplains. I will also work with our interagency partners to ensure that Service members have tailored, individual support when they transition from military service or between active and reserve duty status. I take this responsibility with the utmost seriousness.

Reserve Components

Historically, the reserve components have been positioned as a strategic reserve to be used in the event of significant armed conflict involving the United States. In the post-9/11 era, reserve forces have been used more extensively to support both contingency operations and ongoing military requirements. Today, in addition to being an operational reserve, members of the reserve component are used continuously as a part-time workforce for the Department of Defense to perform its ongoing training and readiness requirements.

- 37. In your view, should the reserve components serve as a part-time workforce, an operational reserve, a strategic reserve, or some combination of those?**

The Reserve Component has played an invaluable role in meeting the Department's operational requirements during nearly 25 years of contingency operations. Our Reserve forces serve as force multipliers in every warfare domain and provide critical combat support capabilities not always resident in the Regular Component. As a result, I am confident that demand for an operational reserve will continue. As the Department continues to focus on increasing lethality, we must also ensure the Reserve Component is ready to fulfill its primary statutory role as a strategic reserve in a time of war, national emergency, or at such other times as the national security may require.

- 38. Do the reserve components require increased levels of full-time support and oversight by the active component, including improved equipment, increased training, additional compensation and reimbursement, effective career management, balanced Professional Military Education requirements, and higher levels of overall resourcing for readiness going forward?**

If confirmed, I will strive to ensure that the Department carefully balances continued operational demand for Reserve forces with their readiness to mobilize in times of war, and to ensure that the Reserve Component has what it needs to meet mission requirements.

- 39. In your view, what legislative reforms should be made to facilitate easier transitions for members of all components between the active and reserve components?**

Facilitating smoother transitions between Active and Reserve Component status is crucial for maintaining a highly capable and adaptable Total Force. If confirmed, I will thoroughly review this matter and pursue any needed legislative remedies via the Department's legislative proposal process, to include streamlining mobilization authorities to enhance transitions between components.

- 40. What changes to duty status laws do you believe are most needed to ensure the reserve components are resourced, managed, and supported effectively for their current and future missions?**

If confirmed, I am committed to supporting the Department's efforts to enact Duty Status Reform, as directed in section 513 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018. Duty Status Reform would streamline over 20 current authorities into four categories, mitigating gaps and disparities with pay and benefits, while maintains the integrity of Title 10 and Title 32. Duty Status Reform would simplify the duty status construct, enhance operational readiness, improve Service member and family predictability, and help sustain a ready and resilient Total Force. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and the Office of Management and Budget to accomplish this reform.

Military Family Readiness and Support

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

There are many significant readiness issues impacting military families, and permanent change of station (PCS) moves play a role in nearly all of them. PCS moves have cross-cutting impact, as geographic dislocation requires families to find new military spouse employment, childcare, healthcare, education and housing arrangements, and can impose significant out-of-pocket expenses. Lessening PCS move frequency could significantly improve military family stability. Of the remaining issues, the availability of accessible, high-quality, affordable childcare and meaningful military spouse employment are among the most significant.

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

If confirmed, I will work with the Military Departments to consider a range of opportunities to improve access to accessible, high-quality, and affordable childcare, including expanding public-private partnerships, in-home childcare offerings, and fee assistance, as well as working with state legislatures to remove state licensing requirements for Family Child Care home providers who already hold a Department childcare license.

43. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to improve military spouse employment?

Meaningful military spouse employment is often key to a household's financial stability. If confirmed, I will further the Department's efforts to reduce the frequency of PCS moves, providing military spouses with greater geographic stability and improving their ability to remain with a current employer. I will also examine current Department military spouse hiring efforts and partnership programs with civilian employers.

Department of Defense Education Activity, DOD Schools, and Dependent Education (DODEA)

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

I believe DoDEA schools are high-quality educational options for eligible military-connected children, as evidenced by DoDEA's repeated #1 national ranking for fourth- and eighth-grade students in the National Assessment of Educational Progress' reading and math assessments.

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

To my understanding, DoDEA's above-the-school level overhead—approximately 12%, versus the 88% positioned at the school level—reflects both its dual role as a State Education Agency and multiple Local Education Agencies, and the unique demands of operating a global school system. Unlike a typical high-performing public school district, DoDEA headquarters performs both state-level functions and district-level operations. That centralized structure is essential to supporting schools across multiple countries, time zones, and military installations—including in remote or complex environments—and enables consistent curriculum delivery, student services, and compliance with both Department and educational standards. If confirmed, I will commit to closely examine DoDEA's costs to ensure that the Department is a good steward of taxpayer resources while providing high-quality education to military-connected students.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 authorized DODEA to implement School Advisory Committees across all DODEA schools.

46. If confirmed, how will you ensure this implementation runs smoothly and ensures all stakeholders, including parents, have input and oversight over DODEA schools?

I understand that DoDEA has implemented School Advisory Committees in its domestic schools during the current school year, and they are operating successfully. This aligns with the long-standing practice of School Advisory Committees in overseas DoDEA schools. If confirmed, I would ensure continued support for this initiative by promoting clear guidance, widespread participation, and regular communication to ensure all stakeholders—especially parents—have meaningful input and oversight in school-level decision-making.

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

It is my understanding that DoDEA student-to-teacher ratios—18:1 for grades K–3 and approximately 24:1 for grades 4–12—are comparable to or lower than those in many highly-ranked public school districts across the United States. These ratios, established by Congress and authorized through the 2029-2030 school year, are critical to delivering individualized attention, academic success, and support for military-connected students, especially given the unique challenges they face. While I do not currently have a recommendation concerning these ratios, if confirmed I would support continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure they remain responsive to student needs, staffing capacity, and evolving educational priorities.

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

The quality and availability of local public educational options is certainly one of the many factors that should be considered in Departmental and military service basing decisions, particularly concerning military installations with large permanent populations.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, schools across the country reported behavioral challenges with students returning to the classroom. DODEA was not immune to this trend.

49. If confirmed, how will you ensure schools and teachers have appropriate support staff to manage students' mental health, behavior challenges, and other special needs concerns?

I believe that a multi-pronged approach is needed to ensure DoDEA schools and teachers have the appropriate support staff to address students' mental health, behavioral challenges, and special needs. I understand that DoDEA has taken steps to expand mental health services, including hiring additional school psychologists, which lowered the psychologist to student ratio from 1:900 to 1:700. If confirmed, I would advocate for improved coordination among the Department's mental health programs. Strengthening partnerships with military service mental health programs is also essential, as these collaborations can enhance access to care, streamline referrals, and provide continuity of support for military-connected students and families.

50. If confirmed, how would you improve teacher hiring at DODEA to ensure teachers are in place at the beginning of every school year? In your view, would any additional authorities be required to speed up the hiring process?

I understand that DoDEA's teacher hiring effort this school year was its most successful in a decade, with 96% of classroom teachers in place at the beginning of this school year. Continued progress will depend on supporting internal hiring initiatives and addressing other challenges, including the dual statutory framework for DoDEA—Title 10 for domestic schools and Title 20 for overseas schools—which

complicates consistent hiring practices and makes it difficult to establish a single, base-pay system for educators under the Department's authority.

I believe areas that may warrant further examination include expanding direct hire authority for military spouses to be appointed to excepted service positions, prioritizing official passport processing for educators hired to serve overseas, modernizing fingerprint submission systems for background check processes, and exploring expedited background check adjudication during peak hiring periods to improve efficiency and ensure timely staffing.

Commissary and Military Exchange Systems

The commissary system is one of the most valuable benefits afforded to the military community, but the Department has struggled to maintain its customer base.

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

I understand that DeCA is interested in maximizing the availability and use of the commissary benefit to all eligible commissary patrons, and that more data collection and analysis is needed to determine if the pilot program extending commissary privileges to DoW civilian employees at certain locations has reduced DeCA's reliance on appropriated funds.

52. What would you do to increase patronage of military commissaries by servicemembers and their dependents, especially among junior enlisted members?

If confirmed, I would work with DeCA and the Military Departments to preserve—and, where possible, improve—the significant savings on groceries for DeCA patrons. I would also work to ensure Service members and their families are aware of that significant savings and that the product offerings, operating hours and shopping methods, to include delivery, align with patron demand.

53. What role could the commissary system play in reducing food insecurity among military-connected families?

I believe DeCA's 235 commissaries worldwide support nutritional readiness among military-connected families. If confirmed, I would look for ways to increase DeCA's sales volume, which could increase savings, and also ensure that DeCA's product offerings, operating hours and shopping methods, to include delivery, best support the nutritional needs of military-connected families.

54. In your view, what impact does expanding commissary eligibility to civilians have on the long-term value of the benefit to the military community?

I believe expanding commissary eligibility in a measured manner that does not harm in-stock rates or checkout line wait times may offer long-term value to the military community.

55. What is the impact of increased civilian access to commissaries and exchanges to the level of appropriation needed to support and maintain the benefit for military members and their dependents?

To my understanding, DeCA has not observed impacts to its reliance on appropriated funding stemming from the civilian access pilot at 16 commissaries. If confirmed, I will closely examine the data from the pilot before working with Congress to find the best path forward with respect to increasing civilian access to commissaries.

56. Do you believe privatization of commissary stores in urban areas would enable the Department to focus on overseas and rural areas where the need for commissaries is greater?

Reducing the number of commissaries that DeCA operates would likely increase DeCA's ability to focus on high-need locations but may have adverse secondary impacts. If confirmed, I will closely examine multiple courses of action to increase the value of savings to patrons, reduce the annual appropriation DeCA requires, or accomplish both of those goals.

Department of Defense Civilian Workforce Matters

The 2024 Commission on the National Defense Strategy noted that “The DoD workforce and the all-volunteer force provide an unmatched advantage.”

57. Describe the importance of DOD's civilian workforce as part of a total force focused on meeting the Department's responsibilities for national defense, as outlined in the most recent National Defense Strategy.

I believe DoW's civilian workforce is an essential and enduring part of the Total Force, providing technical expertise, operational continuity, and mission assurance in direct support of the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance and the upcoming National Defense Strategy (NDS). DoW civilians provide knowledge and skills that sustain readiness: they design, build, maintain, and modernize weapons systems; manage global installations; develop and deliver warfighting training; and provide healthcare and family support. As the Department continues to modernize, it must ensure that every civilian position is aligned with critical mission priorities. If confirmed, I will champion a civilian workforce that will strengthen the Department's

ability to sustain the world's most capable fighting force and achieve peace through strength.

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

I am encouraged by the hundreds of thousands of Department civilians who declined to pursue extended paid administrative leave and continue to serve in the Department, and also by the thousands of applicants for the Department's current job openings. The high demand for Department jobs provides the ability to selectively hire and allow its top performers to ascend to roles of greater responsibility.

59. What is your view of the effect on morale, and effectiveness of the DOD's civilian workforce in light of the Administration's proposed reductions in the workforce?

I am encouraged by the hundreds of thousands of Department civilians who elected to remain with the Department rather than take extended paid administrative leave, and my experience in the Department daily highlights the effectiveness of that critical workforce.

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

I believe a primary challenge is sustaining a strong and agile Organic Industrial Base (OIB) workforce amid declining manpower and growing technical skills gaps. That challenge threatens the readiness of key systems, increases sustainment costs, and creates long-term risks to national defense. Competition for critical talent, particularly in engineering, cyber, and manufacturing, remains intense. If confirmed, I will work with Department leaders to strengthen hiring processes, accelerate training pipelines, and modernize workforce management practices to ensure the OIB and the broader civilian workforce can best support the Department's critical priorities.

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

The use of borrowed military manpower to perform inherently civilian functions can lead to a reduction and should only be used to support the Department's most critical priorities. Alternatively, where borrowed military manpower provides short-term technical expertise not present in the Department's civilian workforce, it may reduce costs by reducing the requirement for contracted personnel.

Section 129a of title 10, United States Code, states the Department "may not reduce the civilian workforce programmed full-time equivalent levels unless the

Secretary conducts an appropriate analysis of the impacts of such reductions on workload, military force structure, lethality, readiness, operational effectiveness, stress on the military force, and fully burdened costs.”

- 62. If confirmed, do you commit to adhering to the law to ensure any reductions of the workforce do not adversely impact military readiness?**

Yes.

Cyber and Science-Technical Workforce

- 63. In your view, how effective is the Cyber Excepted Service workforce authority codified in section 1599f of title 10, United States Code, in helping the Department meet its requirements for a highly-qualified and competent cyber workforce? Do you have any recommendations to improve that authority?**

I believe the Cyber Excepted Service (CES) authority has been a critical step towards building a competitive and mission-focused cyber workforce. CES gives the Department the agility to effectively recruit, compensate, and retain highly qualified cyber professionals. However, to sustain effectiveness, I believe the Department should continue expanding CES flexibilities while maintaining accountability and performance standards. If confirmed, I will work closely with the office of the DoW Chief Information Officer to fully leverage CES and strengthen the Department's cyber capabilities.

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

Though active-duty personnel bring valuable operational perspective to research and development, civilians in STEM and cyber roles provide critical long-term technical expertise and stability. Civilians maintain continuity, refine systems, and enhance lethality without constant rotation. Any cost savings from using military personnel are often offset by the training required to match civilian technical skill levels. I believe the best approach is clearly dividing responsibilities, with military members leading and fighting and civilians advancing innovation and sustaining our technological edge.

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

If confirmed, I will coordinate through the Office of the Under Secretary of War for Personnel to support the Office of the Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering in ensuring laboratory directors have the workforce flexibilities they

need to attract, develop, and retain world-class science, technology, and engineering talent. This includes maximizing the use of direct hire authorities and providing pay and retention flexibility while identifying and eliminating barriers that slow hiring or limit innovation. I will also encourage public-private partnerships and targeted outreach to universities and industry to ensure our labs remain on the cutting edge of technological development.

66. Do you have recommendations for how to better track the workforce with highly specialized technical skills, including cyber, acquisition, scientific and engineering degrees, to ensure that DOD has sufficient people to assess whether DOD is able to compete with the private sector for talent?

I believe that, to remain competitive with the private sector, the Department must strengthen its ability to identify, track, and manage specialized technical talent. Greater visibility of the workforce's mission-critical skills and any skills gaps And will allow the Department to better target incentives, streamline hiring, make informed resource decisions, and reduce overreliance on contractors. If confirmed, I will support efforts to enhance workforce tracking capabilities to ensure civilian resources are used efficiently to support the Department's most critical priorities.

Senior Executive Service

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

If confirmed, I will carefully review the Department's current methodology and process for selecting SES candidates, including any preferred factors and characteristics and the associated weight they are given. I will also advocate for improving that methodology in any way necessary, at all times complying with all applicable statutory requirements.

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

If confirmed, I will comply with all Departmental requirements for performance oversight, setting clear expectations, giving frequent and direct feedback, and basing evaluations on organizational performance. I would also require my direct reports to do the same with their subordinates.

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

The Department offers a variety of SES development programs; however, consistency and rigor vary across DoW Components. If confirmed, I will assess these programs to ensure they produce results-oriented, accountable leaders capable of driving change and improving mission performance. Development programs should focus on measurable outcomes and prepare executives to lead large organizations, deliver efficiencies, and uphold high standards of performance and integrity. I would also explore opportunities to expand cross-Component development, strengthen mentoring, and ensure succession planning to cultivate the next generation of civilian leaders.

Congressional Oversight

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

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

73. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to keep this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously

provided? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.