

NOMINATIONS OF DR. LAURA J. JUNOR, TO BE PRINCIPAL DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS; MR. GORDON O. TANNER, TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE; MS. DEBRA S. WADA, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS; MS. MIRANDA A.A. BALLENTINE, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE FOR INSTALLATIONS, ENVIRONMENT, AND ENERGY; AND DR. MONICA C. REGALBUTO, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF ENERGY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT.

THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 2014

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:37 a.m., in room 216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, Nelson, Donnelly, Hirono, Kaine, King, Inhofe, Sessions, and Ayotte.

Committee staff members present: Peter K. Levine, staff director; Leah C. Brewer, nominations and hearings clerk.

Majority staff members present: Jonathan D. Clark, counsel; Jonathan S. Epstein, counsel; Gabriella E. Fahrner, counsel; Gerald J. Leeling, general counsel; Mariah K. McNamara, special assistant to the staff director; and Michael J. Noblet, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: John A. Bonsell, minority staff director; Daniel C. Adams, minority associate counsel; Steven M. Barney, minority counsel; Samantha L. Clark, minority associate counsel; Allen M. Edwards, professional staff member; Anthony J. Lazarski, professional staff member; and Daniel A. Lerner, professional staff member.

Staff assistants present: Brendan J. Sawyer and Alexandra M. Hathaway.

Committee members' assistants present: Cathy Haverstock, assistant to Senator Nelson; Rachel H. Lipsey, assistant to Senator

Donnelly; Karen E. Courington, assistant to Senator Kaine; Stephen M. Smith, assistant to Senator King; George Elliott, assistant to Senator Sessions; Tyler Stephens, assistant to Senator Chambliss; and Bradley L. Bowman, assistant to Senator Ayotte.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody.

The committee meets this morning to consider the nominations of Dr. Laura Junor to be Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness; Gordon Tanner to be General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force; Debra Wada to be Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; Miranda Ballentine to be Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Installations, Environment, and Energy; and Dr. Monica Regalbuto to be Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management.

We welcome you and your family members this morning. The committee always recognizes the tremendous contributions that are made by the support of engaged family members that we are all so blessed to have. We thank you all for joining us and for joining your family members here today. We encourage our nominees, during your opening statements, to introduce family members and others who might be here to support you.

The positions to which today's witnesses have been nominated are important and challenging assignments.

The Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness responsibilities include recruitment, retention, pay and benefits, health care, readiness, and quality of life for the men and women of our Armed Forces. And if confirmed for this position, Dr. Junor will play a critical role in the department's efforts to address the difficult issues, ranging from reductions in end-strength, the increasing cost of military health care, sexual assaults in the military, and changes in assignment policies relating to women in the Armed Forces, and that is just naming a few.

The General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force is the chief legal officer and chief ethics official in the Air Force. He will provide legal advice and guidance to the Secretary of the Air Force, as well as legal services throughout the Air Force in a variety of disciplines. He will also provide oversight of intelligence and other sensitive activities and investigations.

The Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs is responsible for the supervision of the manpower and Reserve component affairs of the Army. And if confirmed, Ms. Wada will face many challenges, among them ensuring that the Army executes end-strength reductions in a way that preserves readiness and protects against a hollow force, prevention and response to sexual assaults in the Army, and assignment policies for female soldiers.

The Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Installations, Environment, and Energy has a diverse portfolio that includes several issues directly impacting the readiness of our Air Force. Ms. Ballentine will have responsibility for overseeing the construction and maintenance of facilities in a time of increased budget austerity, ensuring that the Air Force is maximizing energy efficiency

and security, and navigating environmental issues relating to installations safety and occupational health.

And I believe that your great success, Ms. Ballentine, has its roots in your formative years that you spent in Michigan. And I am pleased that your parents, who are also Michigan residents, could be with us today. We give them a special welcome. My colleagues will forgive me for that, I know.

The Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management will oversee the ongoing cleanup at 16 former Cold War-era Defense production sites spread across 11 States. Upholding the Federal Government's commitment to remediate these sites is of critical importance to the States and local communities in which they are located. And Dr. Regalbuto, if confirmed, will play a central role in carrying out that commitment.

So we welcome our nominees here today. We look forward to their testimony and, hopefully, their swift confirmation.

Senator Inhofe?

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JAMES M. INHOFE

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me just say that I concur in the comments that you made and the significance of each position. And I look forward to hearing from each one of you. And I just hope that you recognize, also five of you, that we are in a situation

that, certainly in my 20 years in the United States Senate and on this committee, that I have never seen a more stressed time, in terms of budget problems and all of that.

So I am sure you will keep that in mind. I hope that you will. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, Senator Inhofe.

Dr. Junor?

STATEMENT OF LAURA J. JUNOR TO BE PRINCIPAL DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS

Dr. JUNOR. Good morning, Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Inhofe, and members of the committee. I am honored to be here before you today, and I appreciate the confidence that President Obama has expressed in nominating me to be the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

I would also like to thank my family, who is with me here today: my mother, Phyllis Gladhill; my 17-year-old daughter, Madeline; my husband and an incredibly patient man, T.J.; my sister, Ann; and my brother-in-law, Michael Santorios; and my friends and co-workers, who are also here today.

My 7-year-old couldn't be here. She is training for a musical this afternoon, so today is a very big day in our house.

I also would like to recognize and thank the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines, and their families, with whom I have the honor to serve during my career. Their selfless commitment to our Nation and to each other is testament to the strength of our military community and to our Nation.

It has been a privilege for me to have served the Nation in the Department of Defense for over 20 years and currently as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness.

The Office of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Readiness is the focal point of the department on all issues and activities related to the readiness of America's Armed Forces.

As the Deputy Assistant Secretary, my primary responsibility is to ensure that our military is effectively manned, trained, and equipped for all missions.

During my career, I have been part of the military buildup in support of conflicts in two theaters, and subsequently the draw-down of both. Balancing the need to reduce budgets while maintaining a healthy and ready military is the mission that senior department leaders must not fail.

In the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, that is our commitment to the men and women who put themselves in harm's way. The competition for resources should not degrade our ability to respond to conflicts that may threaten the safety of our Nation and those who took oaths to defend.

I believe my experience has prepared me to fill the position of the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

I am an economist, both by training and practice, and favor an analytic approach to most problems. My work has directly influenced policy on a range of topics, including spares and maintenance, aviation, training, contingency sourcing, recruiting and retention, and response options for domestic emergencies.

Finally, I grew up a military dependent and married a naval officer. In that sense, I am familiar with the scope of issues facing military families.

I am grateful to the members of the committee and to all Members of Congress for their support, the support that they have given to our men and women in uniform and their families.

If confirmed, I pledge to you that I will work diligently on behalf of the Nation's servicemembers, their families and our civilian workforce that supports them, along with this committee and Congress.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Junor follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Mr. Tanner?

**STATEMENT OF GORDON O. TANNER TO BE GENERAL
COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE**

Mr. TANNER. Thank you, Chairman Levin, Senator Inhofe, and members of the committee. It is a great honor to be before you as the nominee for General Counsel of the Air Force.

I would also like to thank President Obama, Secretaries Hagel and James for the trust they have placed in me. I want to thank the staff and members of this committee for the great courtesy they have shown during this process. I realize that this is a very busy time, and I appreciate the hard work it took to make this hearing happen.

I would also like to thank my family and friends, whose continued support through the years has been essential. In particular, I

appreciate my mother, husband, and sister being here with me today.

Finally, I want to thank the airmen, soldiers, sailors, Marines and their families, with whom I have had the honor to serve during my career as an Active Duty and Reserve Judge Advocate as well as a member of the civil service.

My life has been enriched by the opportunity to serve with them.

I am deeply humbled and honored by this nomination. The most fulfilling job that I have had in my career to date was as Principal Deputy General Counsel of the Air Force, and I am excited by the prospect, if confirmed, of serving as the Air Force General Counsel.

The challenges facing the Department of the Air Force are many, and I look forward to helping Secretary James Under Secretary Fanning, and the rest of the Air Force team as they grapple with these challenges.

But most of all, I am especially happy to be nominated for a position that will allow me to improve the lives of dedicated Air Force personnel who work to protect America and, when called upon, put themselves in harm's way for our country.

I am committed to continuing and enhancing the close and productive working relationship and partnership with the Air Force JAG and other military lawyers in the department. I am proud that I had a great relationship with the Air Force Judge Advocate leadership during my tenure as Principal Deputy General Counsel. Its senior leadership were not merely great colleagues, but close friends.

I am firmly convinced that the leadership of the Air Force is best served when the civilian and military lawyers work together as a team to offer the best possible legal advice to our mutual clients.

Should I be confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee in addressing any legal issues that may arise during my tenure. I am grateful for your consideration, and I look forward to your questions.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tanner follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Tanner.

Ms. Wada?

STATEMENT OF DEBRA S. WADA TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

Ms. WADA. Mr. Chairman, Senator Inhofe, members of the committee, I am honored that the President has nominated me for the position of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. It is a privilege to be here today to respond to any questions or issues with respect to my nomination.

I would like to thank President Obama, Secretary of the Army John McHugh, Representatives Smith and Davis, as well as Chairmen McKeon and Wilson, for their support of my nomination.

I would also like to recognize my family and friends for providing me their unwavering love and support for me to pursue my dreams. I would also be remiss if I did not recognize my colleagues who have provided me their wise counsel over the years.

If confirmed, it would be an honor for me to continue my service on the behalf of the soldiers, civilians, contractors, survivors, and families. I believe that my 27 years on Capitol Hill, including 14 years on the House Armed Services Committee, provide me the depth of experience and expertise to successfully execute the responsibilities of this position.

I look forward to continuing my work with this committee and the Congress to address the personnel challenges the Army is facing and will continue to face in the next several years.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Wada follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Ms. Wada.

Ms. Ballentine?

STATEMENT OF MIRANDA A.A. BALLENTINE TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE FOR INSTALLATIONS, ENVIRONMENT, AND ENERGY

Ms. BALLENTINE. Good morning, Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Inhofe, Senators. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee as nominee for Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Installations, Environment, and Energy.

I would like to start by thanking my family: my husband, Roger Ballentine, who knows the rigors of government service all too well and, nonetheless, has supported my nomination wholeheartedly; my kids, stepdaughter Eliza, who is 10, and daughter, Grace, who is 4½, who are always very forgiving of my time.

Here today also are my parents, Bob and Dina Anderson, who, Senator Levin, as you point out, drove from Michigan to support me today, and from whom I learned the importance of government service.

I am grateful to President Obama, Secretary Hagel, Secretary James, and Under Secretary Fanning for their support of my nomination.

Although I have never experienced the gravity of signing on the dotted line, committing my very life if necessary to protect my country, I do know what it means to be a profoundly grateful citizen of the United States. And since my nomination, I have voraciously read the writings of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, trying to put my feet in their boots, trying to see through their eyes and the eyes of their families.

Thus, if confirmed, I would consider this role as an opportunity to serve those who serve, to serve my President, my country, and, most of all, the men and women of the United States Air Force. This nomination is also an opportunity for me to honor those in my family who have served in the military, my father, my father-in-law, and my late grandfather, a World War II vet who served in the Army with one of the Air Force's founding fathers, General Claire Chennault.

I believe that many of the skills I have built in my private sector career transfer well to the job of Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Installations, Environment, and Energy. Today's airmen depend on installations that operate effectively and efficiently, and I understand that the Secretary and the Chief have had to make

hard choices in this tight fiscal environment to maximize mission effectiveness while making every dollar count.

If confirmed, I understand that I would face multifaceted, difficult decisions with few clear-cut solutions. My time at America's largest company gives me proven experience in leading global teams to develop and execute winning strategies for facilities, environment, and energy.

Coming from a company with over 11,000 facilities in over two dozen countries, I bring a history of successfully working with top leadership to balance competing priorities, manage limited resources, and drive mission-oriented solutions to complex problems.

If confirmed, I pledge to make every dollar count in the Air Force's installation management portfolio, handle environmental issues with integrity and speed, and help drive energy efficiency improvements in the Department of Defense's largest energy bill.

Thank you for your service and for considering my nomination, and I look forward to taking your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ballentine follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, Ms. Ballentine.

Dr. Regalbuto?

STATEMENT OF MONICA C. REGALBUTO TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF ENERGY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Dr. REGALBUTO. Thank you, Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Inhofe, and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee for Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management of the United States Department of Energy.

I would like to begin my statement by expressing my gratitude to the President for his confidence demonstrated by this nomination. I am honored and humbled to be here. And should I be confirmed, I will do my best to meet that confidence.

I would like to thank Secretary Moniz for his support and for his leadership of the Department of Energy.

Professional achievement is seldom an individual effort. I have had the privilege of working with a multitude of talented people throughout my career as a chemical engineer. There are countless family members, friends, mentors, and colleagues who have done so much over the years to make this day possible.

I want to especially thank and recognize my husband, John, for always being supportive and patient, and to my adult children, Ricky, Carol, and Robby, for their sense of humor as they grew up in a hybrid culture, hearing my daily use of science-based Spanglish.

Lastly, I would not be here without the love and support of my parents, Horacio and Conchita, for instilling in me great values during my childhood, and for my parents in law, John and Carole, who I consider my second set of parents.

Mr. Chairman, I began my studies in Mexico, where, through great economic sacrifice of my family, I attended private schools, which offered a better education. In high school, I discovered an interest and gift in math and science, and started college seeking a

degree in chemical engineering and computer science at Monterrey State.

At the time, there were very few women in engineering with limited job opportunities. This reality has heavily influenced me. And as such, I have always supported and led efforts that substantially enhance employment opportunities for women and minorities.

I met my husband, John, while I was a student and eventually married him and moved to the United States and proudly acquired my U.S. citizenship.

After completing my Ph.D. at the University of Notre Dame, I joined Argonne National Laboratory in Chicago in 1988. I started my career supporting the development of technologies for the treatment of high-level waste at the Department of Energy plutonium production sites.

After developing strong technical skills, I joined BP Amoco in 1996, where I enhanced my skills in managing complex projects, large projects, and multidisciplinary staff in an industrial setting.

I returned to Argonne in Chicago in 2001 and became the head of the process chemistry department where I worked on new technologies for the treatment of used nuclear fuel.

In addition, I was a member of the fuel cycle study team of the Massachusetts Institute of technology. My participation in this study not only allowed me to gain experience working with high-level officials and nongovernmental organizations but brought to my attention the need for safe, permanent disposal of all types of radioactive waste.

In 2008, I had the unique opportunity to join the Department of Energy Office of Environmental Management, where I serve as senior project manager supporting their strategic mission in the waste processing area.

I also serve as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fuel Cycle Technologies within the Office of Nuclear Energy. In this position, I was responsible for directing the research and development programs involving 10 national laboratories, 32 universities, over 400 students, and 300 professors.

The last few years have been an eventful period with respect to nuclear energy. I was directly involved in providing and coordinating emergency responses to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disaster, focusing on opportunities to mitigate the highly contaminated water resulting from emergency cooling of the reactors damaged by the earthquake and subsequent tsunami.

Over the past few decades, I have seen our various nuclear waste management programs from a variety of vantage points. As a scientist at Argonne, I have worked on and led efforts to identify technical solutions to difficult waste management issues. In my previous role, I had been responsible for formulating and articulating the strategic options to expedite the resolution of our waste management needs.

I have also experienced the intricacy of nuclear waste management from a perspective of a waste generator and from a waste disposal specialist during my time at DOE.

Mr. Chairman, the Manhattan Project was a critical component of our success in World War II and the Cold War. The communities and regions that were home to these sites have made sacrifices for

our Nation, and their environmental remediation is both a legal and moral obligation.

2014 marks the 25th anniversary of the EM program. During my time at Argonne and now at the Department of Energy, I have watched the environmental management mission complete 91 sites and have made significant progress in the remaining 16.

But great challenges still remain, which require innovative strategies to clean up efforts while ensuring that work is completely done safely.

I believe my background and experience and commitment have prepared me to lead the Office of Environmental Management during this particular critical time. And I welcome the opportunity to continue my service to the Nation as Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management.

If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with this committee and others in Congress to continue and ensure that our safe cleanup of the environmental legacy remains a priority.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you and your committee today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Regalbuto follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Dr. Regalbuto.

I am going to ask all of you the standard questions and then turn it over to Senator Inhofe, who has to leave here for a few minutes for another commitment.

So these questions, you can all answer at the same time.

Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

Dr. REGALBUTO. Yes.

Ms. WADA. Yes.

Ms. BALLENTINE. Yes.

Dr. JUNOR. Yes.

Mr. TANNER. Yes.

Chairman LEVIN. Have you assumed any duties, or undertaken any actions, which would appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

Dr. REGALBUTO. No.

Ms. WADA. No.

Ms. BALLENTINE. No.

Dr. JUNOR. No.

Mr. TANNER. No.

Chairman LEVIN. Would you ensure that your staff complies with deadlines established for requested communications, including questions for the record, and hearings?

Dr. REGALBUTO. Yes.

Ms. WADA. Yes.

Ms. BALLENTINE. Yes.

Dr. JUNOR. Yes.

Mr. TANNER. Yes.

Chairman LEVIN. Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to congressional requests?

Dr. REGALBUTO. Yes.

Ms. WADA. Yes.

Ms. BALLENTINE. Yes.

Dr. JUNOR. Yes.

Mr. TANNER. Yes.

Chairman LEVIN. Will those witnesses be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

Dr. REGALBUTO. Yes.

Ms. WADA. Yes.

Ms. BALLENTINE. Yes.

Dr. JUNOR. Yes.

Mr. TANNER. Yes.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify upon request before this committee?

Dr. REGALBUTO. Yes.

Ms. WADA. Yes.

Ms. BALLENTINE. Yes.

Dr. JUNOR. Yes.

Mr. TANNER. Yes.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly constituted committee or to consult with a committee regarding the basis for any good-faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

Dr. REGALBUTO. Yes.

Ms. WADA. Yes.

Ms. BALLENTINE. Yes.

Dr. JUNOR. Yes.

Mr. TANNER. Yes.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Senator Inhofe?

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In looking at the five of you, I think the one that arguably would have the toughest job is you, Dr. Junor, because of the real problem, the key word there is readiness. There was article that I read last night. I will quote from it. This was in Politico. It said: Authorizers and appropriators have so far mostly ignored the Defense Department's budget plans in favor of protecting big-ticket weapons programs, home district allocations, and troop pay benefits and personnel programs.

Then, on the other hand, we have heard from all of the service Chiefs, all of them, in uniform plus the Secretaries, that we have a real dire situation. I will read you a quote from General Dempsey, who is the very top person. He says: Our force is so degraded and so unready that it would be immoral to use force.

We are in a situation now that we have never, certainly, been in, as I said in part of my opening statement. We have a crisis on our hands.

So I would ask you, first of all, do you recognize the severity of our readiness shortfall at the present time, and do you have any thoughts about how you are going to address that, keeping in mind this is not your fault? You inherited this mess, but what are you going to do?

Dr. JUNOR. Sir, I am very familiar with it. The conflicts that we have been in for more than a decade now have exhausted our capacity. We have so focused, and correctly so, on meeting the de-

mands of Iraq and Afghanistan, we have very little residual capacity in full spectrum operations.

And this has been a concern. It has been something—I have been in this position for 3 years, and it has been my daily commitment to understand this problem better, to find out not just how it affects the unit, but the pipeline processes that generate that manpower.

Senator INHOFE. I think that that is key there, because when you go over there, and you have gone over and everyone up here has gone over, those who are on the frontlines, they are ready. It is that pipeline that is important.

Dr. JUNOR. That is exactly right. The readiness of the unit is, in effect, a lagging indicator. It is the readiness of the pipelines where the real problems lie.

And when I first started as an analyst as a readiness analyst, it was in the 1990s, and I watched how a problem would grow.

For example, in the Navy, we had a problem with spare parts, and that spare parts created a bow wave that it took literally years to fix.

So fast forward now, in my career, I have never seen so many simultaneous readiness problems.

Senator INHOFE. Exactly.

Dr. JUNOR. And there are negative synergies, and I am at my wits end trying to figure out exactly how they will manifest.

That said, the department has put everything—we recognize where we need investments, and even with our PB15 submission, we tried to find free up the resources to fix the most acute problems. And that is going to be our plan going forward.

Over the last almost 13 years now, our servicemembers and their families have borne the brunt of the cost of these wars, and they deserve as much as a grateful Nation can afford. But we have also promised that we would never again send our servicemembers into harm's way, and the current budget environment makes it really difficult to balance those two imperatives.

Senator INHOFE. And in fact, I would give another quote of the second man down, Admiral Winnefeld. He said there could be a time, for the first time in his career, of instances where we will be asked to respond to a crisis and we will have to say we cannot.

So I think that is the main thing, that you recognize that and you are, certainly, equipped to handle that, and I appreciate that very much.

Dr. JUNOR. Thank you.

Senator INHOFE. Ms. Wada, there has been a lot of discussion as to what we are doing with the Reserve component and changing around responsibilities between the regular services and the Reserve component.

Have you been following that, in our Defense authorization bill and the discussion that has surrounded that issue?

Ms. WADA. Yes, sir, I have.

Senator INHOFE. Do you have any thoughts about it? Are we going the right direction, in terms of shifting some of the responsibilities in order to, I guess, kind of meet the crisis that Dr. Junor is talking about? Do you think that we are going in the right direction?

Ms. WADA. In terms of—

Senator INHOFE. In terms of shifting responsibilities to and from the Reserve component to the regular?

Ms. WADA. Sure. Sir, the Secretary of the Army, as you know, signed onto a total force policy. If confirmed, I would be responsible for implementing that policy.

Senator INHOFE. Yes, okay.

And I notice, and I have addressed this to Ms. Ballentine and Dr. Regalbuto, in both of your titles, the word “environment” is there. I am not real sure how you divide that up? What areas of the environment do each of you have exclusive to the other?

Dr. REGALBUTO. I work for the Department of Energy, and the environmental component for the Department of Energy is exclusively for the cleanup of the legacy from the weapons production sites. It does not include environmental like EPA for other chemicals. It is exclusively for contaminated former weapons production sites.

Senator INHOFE. Okay. What I would like to ask—do you have any comment on that, Ms. Ballentine? I think I understand from her response what your duties would be.

Ms. BALLENTINE. Yes, sir. My duties would be to oversee and create policy for all environmental laws for the Air Force.

Senator INHOFE. Okay, that is fine.

What I would ask of each of you is to be aware of the thing that we are talking about with Dr. Junor, the severity of the situation that we are in right now. And while there is always a temptation to use our resources, our very limited resources, in the military for environmental agenda, resist that temptation as much as you can, and we will be watching and hope we can help you out in that respect, okay?

Ms. BALLENTINE. Thank you, sir.

Dr. REGALBUTO. We will. Thank you, sir.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

Dr. Junor, you have discussed the readiness shortfalls and the need to make sure that whenever we send our men and women into harm's way, that they are fully ready even though we may have a smaller force, that we are never going to send our forces into action unless they are fully ready and equipped. Would you agree that should be our goal?

Dr. JUNOR. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. One of the ways in which the funding is being shifted around a little bit this year, in order to try to reduce the pressure on readiness and to try to restore some of the readiness and modernization shortfalls created by the Budget Control Act and sequestration, which Congress approved, one of the ways that we are looking to try to reduce the impact of sequestration—and I think it was a terrible way to budget and we ought to get rid of it. But in any event, one of the ways we are looking at to reduce the impact is to save about \$31 billion in the budget request over the fiscal yearDP in the area of personnel and health care costs. Are you familiar with that budget request?

Dr. JUNOR. I am.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay. And if we delay enacting those proposals, it will cost the department \$10 billion over the fiscal yearDP, if we delay it by 1 year. A 2-year delay in agreeing to those requests will cost about \$15 billion. And that, of course, means it will be even harder to overcome some of the readiness and modernization shortfalls, which you have identified and Senator Inhofe has identified and I think all of us have identified.

So would you agree that we have to slow the growth of personnel costs, if we are going to buy back readiness and modernization shortfalls?

Dr. JUNOR. I do.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay. Our authorization bill slows some of those costs, not all of them, as requested, but at least we did some of them. We made an effort. I think we made some progress.

Now, in terms of sequestration, what would be the impact on the department's ability to meet the National defense and strategic objectives if sequestration occurs again in fiscal year 2016?

Dr. JUNOR. It is my understanding that we could not meet the defense strategy.

Chairman LEVIN. Ms. Ballentine, you, for the last 5 years, served as director of sustainability, renewable energy and sustainable facilities at Wal-Mart. Can you tell us what your experience is as to whether or not there are circumstances which make it very economically sensible for us to invest in energy conservation and alternative energy sources, and how those views are informed by your experience in the private sector?

Ms. BALLENTINE. Thank you, sir.

First of all, I would like to say that, if confirmed, I want to give my assurance to this committee that I would make every taxpayer dollar count in our installation management.

I do currently work for one of, if not the largest private energy consumer in the United States, and we have developed a strategy that emphasizes saving money in the energy portfolio as a way to contribute to our underlying mission of saving people money so they can live better.

There are really multiple elements to that. Energy conservation and energy efficiency, making every Btu count toward the mission, is job number one.

Renewable energy, we have found at Wal-Mart, can be a reliable, viable, and affordable piece of a broader energy puzzle.

I will tell you that Wal-Mart has more solar rooftops than any other company in this country, and every single one of those projects meets or beats brown power prices over the course of the contract.

Renewable energy does not work everywhere. It is really a piece of a broader puzzle.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Ms. Wada, I think we all deeply believe that servicemembers who are wounded or injured in combat operations deserve the highest priority from the Army and the Federal Government for support services; for healing and recuperation; rehabilitation; evaluation for return to duty; successful transition from Active Duty; if required, continuing support beyond retirement or discharge.

Now, despite the enactment of legislation, our Wounded Warriors legislation, and renewed emphasis over the past several years, there are a lot of challenges that remain.

First of all, I want to commend the Army for proactively providing the VA with additional staff to help the VA process servicemembers through its portion of the integrated disability evaluation system more quickly.

Would you anticipate, if confirmed, continuing such collaboration?

Ms. WADA. Sir, yes. If confirmed, I will work with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of the Army.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, in the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2008, so that is 6 years ago now, Congress required the Department of Defense to utilize the VA schedule for rating disabilities. Do you know whether the Army is complying with that requirement?

Ms. WADA. Sir, I believe that the Army is complying with that requirement, but if confirmed, I will confirm that and respond back to the committee in assurance.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Let me ask now both Mr. Tanner and you, Ms. Wada, about the pilot program that the airport Air Force initiated to provide victims of sexual assault with their own attorney and to represent them during the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators.

This program has now been implemented by all the military services.

First, Mr. Tanner, you have been working on sexual assault prevention and response issues in the Air Force for several years. Were you involved in the development of the Air Force's pilot program to provide the special victim's counsel to victims of sexual assault?

Mr. TANNER. Yes, sir. And if confirmed, I would look forward to continuing to assist the Air Force and advise the Air Force in the further development of its sexual assault program.

Chairman LEVIN. And what is your assessment of that particular Special Victims' Counsel Program?

Mr. TANNER. My assessment is that it is a very successful program for several reasons, not the least of which is that it provides an arm for the commander to care for victims who may be in that commander's unit.

It is the role of the commander to not only hold certain members accountable for sexual assault, but also to care for victims of sexual assault within that commander's unit.

And I believe a special victim's counsel not only provides a meaningful way for victims be assisted throughout this process, but also healthy feedback to commanders of ways that the commander can improve the climate and the service to its members.

Chairman LEVIN. Ms. Wada, do you have a different view of it all, or do you agree with what Mr. Tanner said?

Ms. WADA. Sir, I understand that the Army has implemented the special victim counsel, according to the law. At this point, that is the extent of my knowledge as to the success.

Chairman LEVIN. All right. Will you find out for us and let us know?

Ms. WADA. Certainly, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much.

Now I am going to act as though I came first. I am going to call on another Democrat, who is next, so it will be Senator Hirono.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Ballentine, energy security in the Department of Defense and the Air Force are vitally important for our future. As we all know, the DOD is the biggest user of energy of all of the departments.

So as Assistant Secretary in this area, what initiatives will you pursue to continue sound energy conservation practices and ensure energy security for the future in the Air Force?

Ms. BALLENTINE. I understand that the Air Force has the largest energy bill within department of Defense, and that the Department of Defense has the largest energy bill within the U.S. Government.

Likewise, I happen to come from one of the largest private energy consumers. So I think that putting mission first, there are really three areas to develop a comprehensive energy strategy that can drive down costs in our operations, as well as build some resilience.

So first, fuel efficiency, making every Btu count. If we can accomplish a cargo mission in one sortie instead of two, that is a mission win.

Second and third kind of go together, fuel flexibility and fuel supply assurance. So having airplane engines that can fuel up on all different types of fuels anywhere in the world where they happen to be, and with any type of fuel that is available to them builds fuel flexibility.

And assurance of supply in the case of supply disruptions is also an important element of a comprehensive energy strategy, and something that we think about quite a lot in the private sector as well, mind you.

If confirmed in this position, one of my first orders of business would be to look across the portfolio of activities that have already been undertaken both within the Air Force and across the other branches, and accelerate those projects that are winning already today, saving us money and contributing to efficiency, flexibility, and supply assuredness.

Senator HIRONO. I am particularly intrigued by your fuel flexibility focus. Is the Air Force doing R&D on alternative, sustainable kinds of fuels?

Ms. BALLENTINE. I am not currently familiar with the details of the R&D portfolio. If confirmed, it is something that I would look into.

I do understand that the engines are currently certified to fly on a number of different fuels.

Senator HIRONO. I think that is very important.

For Mr. Tanner, Chairman Levin asked you about your sexual assault prevention and response program, which I believe you said is working well. We want to make sure that the Department of Defense takes very seriously the changes that were in NDAA that addresses the issue of sexual assault.

So could you tell us where the DOD is with regard to implementation of the changes that were made in NDAA on this issue?

Mr. TANNER. Senator, if confirmed, as the Air Force General Counsel, I would look forward to guiding the Air Force in its implementation of those changes. My sense is that the Air Force has made huge progress in its sexual assault program, but there is more to do, including changes in the NDAA.

And I would look forward to working with the sexual assault prevention response team that has now been elevated to a direct report to the vice chief of staff, so that it gains direct senior leadership interest in working with that team to implement those changes.

Senator HIRONO. I should have asked that broader question to Dr. Junor. So what would be your priority in implementing the changes that we made in NDAA sexual assault treatment?

Dr. JUNOR. Yes, Senator. Our number one focus is on victim support, and so making sure that we have enacted and are successful in providing victim support and analyzing case data, for example, to see if our programs we have implemented are working the way they are supposed to.

I am also greatly interested in prevention, making sure that we know what the current climate is and that it is a climate of dignity and respect, and a climate where sexual harassment and sexual assault are unlikely to happen in the first place.

Finally, looking for ways to hold both commanders and perpetrators accountable for these incidents.

Senator HIRONO. I think the prevention aspect is one where I would really like to see more specific kinds of programs, because we know the alcohol is very much involved in these assaults. So the prevention part of it, the command climate is very critical, so I will be probably following up with you on how that is going.

Ms. Wada, aloha.

That gives you an indication she is from Hawaii. [Laughter.]

With the Army facing significant end- strength reductions from 520,000 to 490,000, drawdowns over the next several years, what are the most significant challenges as the Army reduces its total force? How will this impact future Army recruiting and retention?

Ms. WADA. If confirmed, I would work with the Secretary of Army to look at the balance between the reduction in force of the total force between the Active, National Guard, and Reserve.

At this time, there is a total force policy that the Secretary has laid out, and I think, though, that it would have to be addressed further since sequestration still exists.

Senator HIRONO. I have a question for Dr. Junor. At one point, the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs spent \$1 billion, basically, to have the DOD and VA medical records be much more compatible if not the same kind of system.

Where are we with that? And the whole point of that is to make sure that, as the active Duty person transitions to veteran status, that this information goes with him or her. With all of the emphasis on health care in the VA system, where are we with making those records compatible?

Dr. JUNOR. I believe that electronic health records is under the purview AT&L, at this point. And I don't have the details, but I do understand that that is still in development.

The larger issue, even with the IDES system and with the service treatment records for folks who have already left and claimed disabilities, there is a larger issue of information-sharing between DOD, even within the services within DOD, and then from DOD to VA. And there is still a lot of work to be done there.

Improvements have been made. The IDES timeline is shorter than it was. It was about 1½ years and now it is down to just a little over a year, which is still too long.

But there is a lot of work to do. This is something that, if confirmed, I would consider a priority.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

My time is up.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Hirono.

Senator SESSIONS?

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate this opportunity.

And thank all of you for being willing to serve. You are going to be taking office in a time of great national importance, and in a time when our budget is very tight. We don't have the money we have had. We are running unacceptable debts.

Interest on the debt last year was \$220 billion. That is almost half the Defense budget.

But in just a few years, we are projected, I think by 2019, to have interest on the debt that passes the entire Defense Department budget, and CBO says that it will reach \$876 billion in 1 year, interest, in 10 years from today.

So I would just say that we are very anxious and concerned about your difficulties in trying to help the Defense Department manage effectively. But every department and agency will have to tighten its belt.

In my opinion, the Defense Department, to date, has undertaken more cuts than any other department in Government.

So my question, first, would be to all of you. Do you understand the financial challenge we face? And will you do your best in managing your department to produce the needed capabilities for the Defense Department, while reducing costs, wherever possible?

Dr. JUNOR. Yes, sir.

Ms. WADA. Yes, sir.

Ms. BALLENTINE. Yes, sir.

Mr. TANNER. Yes, sir.

Dr. REGALBUTO. Yes, sir.

Session: Thank you.

Dr. Ballentine, you say "yes"?

Ms. BALLENTINE. Yes, sir.

Senator SESSIONS. Good. You are running a private business. I know you know there are limits to what you can spend.

Let me just say, Mr. Chairman, how much I respect Gordon Tanner's legal ability and skill. He has the background that we need for this office.

I have known him as a private practitioner in Mobile. I know his family. He has been in Washington for a number of years now. He is the former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. From 2012 to 2013, he was the Principal Deputy General Counsel of the Air Force and served in

a variety of positions before that. And he retired in March and then has been called back now after 27 years of service. He had many years in Air Force Reserve.

He came from an excellent law firm. Got his undergraduate degree at Alabama and his law degree at Vanderbilt.

And, Mrs. Tanner, his mother, is here. We lost his father, Mr. Cecil Tanner, a great American, last fall.

And, Mrs. Tanner, it is so great to see you.

Among other good qualities they have, they were wonderful Methodists, I have to say.

So, Mr. Chairman, I think that is the kind of background you look for in a position as important as General Counsel for the Air Force.

I have to get to the floor. I thank you all for your willingness to serve, and we are all going to be watching our dollars, aren't we?

Thank you so much.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Sessions.

Senator Kaine?

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to all the witnesses for your service.

Dr. Junor, I have some questions for you about personnel matters. One of my highest priorities as a member of the Armed Services Committee is working with my colleagues and folks at the Pentagon to try to tackle the veterans' unemployment rate.

Some work on that is done in the Veterans' Committee, but I tend to believe that a lot of the way we tackle veterans' unemployment is by what happens when folks are in Active service. And, in particular, I focused on issues surrounding credentialing of our military members for the skills they attain at the moment they attain them, on the theory that, in a Nation where only 1 percent of the people serve in the military, if you go into a hiring hall and say I was a gunnery sergeant in the Marine Corps, or petty officer, people will thank you for your service, but they won't necessarily know what skills and talents you bring to the table.

But if you can get a commercial driver's license or physician's assistant degree or a welding certificate, if you have an ordnance specialty, that can help you immediately get traction in the civilian workforce.

So I want to ask you a little bit about that, because there is a lot of effort underway to make that happen, but there are some concerns that I have.

In your advance policy questions, you mentioned that tuition assistance, the current military tuition assistance program, can be used to pay for academic coursework that supports earning a credential or licensure when part of an improved academic degree plan.

My understanding is that tuition assistance benefit is up to about \$4,500 per fiscal year, if approved. Am I right about that?

Dr. JUNOR. I am actually not sure, but I can find out for the record for you.

Senator KAINE. I think that is more or less the case.

But one of the things I have discovered in looking at this is this issue that you can only access the tuition assistance if it is part of approved academic degree plan.

So let me give you an example. At Fort Lee in Virginia, we train all these logistics specialists, and the ordnance school is there. And ordnance school personnel in the Army take machining and iron-working and welding training.

It takes \$300 to pass the American Welding Society welding certificate exam. That is not an improved academic degree, but it is an accepted credential at any employer in the United States and with some international employers, as well.

Currently, under the military tuition assistance program, you can use \$4,500, I believe that number is correct, to take coursework at a community college or college, but you can't use \$300 to get a Welding Society certification that will enable you to get a job and probably earn more money than just about anything you could get with a degree from a community college.

One of the things I really want to work with you all on is the notion that certifications, technical certifications, they are not all part of academic degree programs.

Probably the best educational program, in my view, for the money in the United States is the shipbuilding apprenticeship program at the Newport News shipyard. These guys build nuclear subs and aircraft carriers. There is a 4-year program, which is 2 years in class and 2 years on the line, where you end up with a certificate, but no academic degree. But you can earn a great living for the rest of your life. There is a 5-year program where you get a community college degree, too.

But you couldn't use military tuition assistance benefits for the 4-year program, even though it is the kind of program that will help somebody get a job.

Can I work with you on this, to try to make sure, because it is not just within the Pentagon, but more generally, we give second-class status to career and technical education in this country, and we have done it for very long time.

I see it in the K-12 world, and I see it in the higher ed world. But I am also seeing it within the DOD. And I would like to work with you to try to erase any second-class stigma around career and technical education.

And the certification has to be a validated one. We don't want to give tuition assistance benefits for certifications that don't mean anything. But for things like Culinary Institute of America, most of the folks who train at Fort Lee as chefs and cooks are now getting training that they can convert into a Culinary Institute of America certification. That is not an approved academic degree program, but I can assure you, with that certificate, you can get a job just about anywhere.

I would love to work with you on that initiative in your new position.

Dr. JUNOR. Sir, I would be honored to. Like you, I absolutely value tradecraft, and there are so many empty jobs in this country for tradesmen that we cannot fill and this would be an excellent opportunity for many of our servicemembers. I would absolutely love to work with you on this.

Senator KAINE. Great. This affects veterans' benefits as well. The G.I. Bill, you can use them for colleges. If you wanted to take a

code academy course and learn to be a computer coder, you can't use the benefits for that.

So again, I think we have to break down some old notions about what is a valid kind of credential.

The mission should be, if it helps you get a meaningful job faster, and it is validated, then it ought to be accessible to military members who want to choose it. I look forward to working with you on that.

I want to ask you a question, Mr. Tanner, about the special victims' counsel pilot project within the Air Force that is now being used more broadly as a result of the NDAA reforms that we have done.

And, in particular, just kind of curious about your experience about the interaction of the Special Victims' Counsel Program with the creation, with the support of Congress, of the restricted report that can be filed. So, generally, someone complaining about crime within a military context files a complaint and it is an unrestricted complaint, and that enables an investigation to go forward and a perpetrator to be punished.

Because of the unique nature of crimes of sexual violence or sexual assault, we created a restricted report where somebody can seek help and get assistance they need, without necessarily saying they want the investigation to go forward.

I understood from some testimony earlier from folks associated with the Air Force that, at least preliminarily, there is some evidence that if somebody gets a special victims' counsel who can walk them through the process and explain their rights and explain what is going to happen, it actually leads many who file restricted complaints to decide "Okay, I am now comfortable enough with the process, and I know that I am protected from retaliation, that I am able to move from a restricted into an unrestricted complaint," which is better in terms of being able to go after a perpetrator, and hopefully stop that individual from perpetrating assaults on others.

This is a number of months ago that there was that discussion. Am I generally right about that? What are you seeing about the restricted/unrestricted complaint filings? And is the special victims' counsel assistance making a difference in that?

Mr. TANNER. Yes, sir. Your recollection is correct.

I believe there are two factors that are affecting an increase in reporting, overall.

The Air Force in fiscal year 2013 reported a 33 percent increase in total reporting, in restricted and unrestricted. The Air Force, I understand, believes that that is due to two things. First is the Special Victims' Counsel Program, which was implemented at that time, which created greater confidence on the part of the victim in the process and protections within the system. Second, I believe the Air Force is committed to enhanced training of all of its members, including its most senior commanders.

And the fact that more people understand the program and the Air Force's commitment to solving this problem, I believe that has created a climate in which reporting has been increased. Again, in fiscal year 2013, not only did we see a 33 percent increase in overall reporting, but we saw a 41 percent increase in unrestricted reporting.

So, to your point, some of that was due to those who had previously filed restricted reports and converted those to unrestricted, which enabled us to then pursue those parties that may be accountable for that. But it is also due to increased training.

Senator KAINE. Great. Thank you very much.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Senator Ayotte?

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me just say that I fully agree with Senator Kaine about this technical careers issue in terms of the trades, because we see it into New Hampshire. There are a lot of jobs that are open, and it makes sense that our veterans can have the opportunity to get this training in our military, because we have such a need in our workforce for this, and there are very good paying jobs. So I want to thank you for raising that issue, and I hope that we do change that, so that we can really give veterans the opportunity that really fits our workforce as well. It is fantastic. Thank you.

Mr. Tanner, I wanted to ask you, in the position as General Counsel to the Air Force, obviously, your primary responsibility is to advise the Air Force and to comply with the laws that the Congress puts together.

You would agree, correct?

Mr. TANNER. Yes, that is correct.

Senator AYOTTE. So there is a law that was passed in the 2014 defense authorization that said that the Department of Defense may not retire, prepare to retire, or place in storage A-10 aircraft before December 31, 2014.

Are you familiar with the provision?

Mr. TANNER. I was not in the General Counsel's office at the time of that enactment. I am generally familiar with it, but have given no advice, nor have I studied that provision.

Senator AYOTTE. Well, if you are confirmed to this position, you will have to give advice to comply with all of our laws. And this law says that the Department of Defense can't retire, prepare to retire, or place in storage, A-10 aircraft, not just by the end of the fiscal year, but by the end of the actual calendar year.

And, in fact, myself and Senator Chambliss have written Secretary James twice, because we keep receiving numerous reports of efforts by the Air Force to actually make steps to retire, prepare to retire, or place in storage, in our view, the A-10 aircraft before the Congress has made its decision on what it will do with the A-10.

It is probably no secret, I am a strong supporter of the A-10. I believe it is the best close air support platform. But this is a debate that has been happening in Congress.

So we have written Secretary James on January 24 of this year, on April 4 of this year, on a variety of issues that have been brought to our attention, that we believed were in violation of the law.

Secretary James has written back to us, and I appreciate that. In one instance, at least, she has said, in responding to our concerns, that she would not implement some of the changes that were being made through the budget year.

But as the new potential General Counsel, I would ask you to really look at the fact that the law doesn't just say that. It says through the calendar year.

Now if Congress acts differently, then obviously you will take that into account. But will you commit to me to carefully review that law and to follow it?

Mr. TANNER. Yes, ma'am. As General Counsel, it is my job to ensure that the Air Force fully complies with the plain meaning of the laws and regulations by which it is bound, and to advise its senior leadership on what compliance with those laws really means.

Senator AYOTTE. Well, thank you. I appreciate it, because I can assure you, we will be watching.

I wanted to also ask you about the special victims' counsel. We have now extended that throughout all the service branches. You said that you have had a good experience in the Air Force, which is really what led our committee to extend the special victims' counsel. I was honored to work on that with Senator Murray, as well, across the branches.

So have you had contact with your other counterparts in the other branches? Because it is my sense that they are going to be coming to the Air Force for advice on how to properly implement this provision. Can you give us some insight on that?

Mr. TANNER. I have not had any contact with my counterparts in the other services, as I had retired in early spring. But, if confirmed for the position of General Counsel of Air Force, I would look forward to working with my colleagues in the other services and share with them the lessons learned from the successful implementation of the Special Victims' Counsel Program in the Air Force.

Senator AYOTTE. Well, that would be great. And I think it would be important because, really, the Air Force has been the leader on this issue. And now we are going to be applying this program across the branches, so your advice will be needed to help the other branches on this, to make sure that every victim of sexual assault has their own counsel and has that advocate within the system to ensure that their rights are protected within the system, so it is important.

Mr. TANNER. If I am confirmed, I will look forward to doing that.

Senator AYOTTE. Well, thank you.

Now, I just wanted to say, finally, Ms. Ballentine, as you may be aware, Pease Air National Guard Base was selected to be the first Air National Guard base to receive the new KC-46A. We are very proud of that.

It is pending a successful outcome of the environmental impact study. We had Secretary James up to visit the 157th Air Refueling Wing in May and to show her what we are doing at Pease.

The Air Force issued the environmental impact study for the second main operation of the KC-46 beddown this month. There weren't any significant issues identified.

So I just want to say to you, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you to base the KC-46A, the beddown, as the first Air National Guard unit in the country at Pease.

We look forward to working with you, because I think that the new tanker is one of the success stories we have of how important it is to replace our Eisenhower-era tankers for the country.

And our refueling capability really distinguishes us from other military and air forces. A lot of things distinguish us in terms of our Air Force compared to the world, but our refueling capability in the conflicts that we have been involved in has really stood out. So I look forward to working with you on that.

Ms. BALLENTINE. Thank you, Senator. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with you as well.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you all. I appreciate it.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Ayotte.

Senator Donnelly?

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks to all of you for stepping up and serving our country. It is very important to all of us.

Dr. JUNOR, as you know, the most recent Department of Defense suicide report found we lost 522 servicemembers to suicide in 2012. And you have noted that the average Active Duty servicemember gets to see a mental health professional about once a year.

And I introduced legislation earlier this year that ensures that this average becomes a minimum, not only for Active Duty, but for Guard and Reserve.

So I was wondering what your plans are for easing access to quality care for members of the Guard and Reserve?

Dr. JUNOR. Sir, this is a huge priority. The Guard and Reserve suicide continues to be a problem. And even last year, when our numbers were slightly better, we still had a downward turn in Guard and Reserve.

The peer support, the homegrown, the State-based peer support initiatives, are some that have been very helpful, especially in the sense that it is a brotherhood. It is somebody who knows your problem, and so it helps reduce the stigma.

The stigma reduction is another big issue that we are having to face.

And then when it comes to just access to care, I think the department has increased the number of behavioral health providers, but I am still concerned about whether it is enough.

So these are all issues I would like to address, if confirmed.

Senator DONNELLY. The other question I wanted to ask you is how can we increase the role of frontline supervisors, more peer-to-peer information?

As we discussed before, I had met with the Israeli defense forces, and they said one of the keys is a bottom-up approach, where more of the squad leaders, platoon leaders, get to see that.

So I was wondering about your ideas on the kind of plans we can use to have more frontline supervisors' help in this process.

Dr. JUNOR. One of our initiatives is going to have to be, and I think we are moving in this direction, is going to have to be ensuring that frontline leaders recognize what signs of stress are and cultivate a climate that will encourage help-seeking behavior.

There are probably 180 or so programs, DOD-wide. A fair amount of them are trying to provide this type of training.

Senator DONNELLY. One part of the legislation is that we try to figure out what are the best practices of all of those, and that we hone in on those, as opposed to just running on 180 willy-nilly.

Dr. JUNOR. And they were all born for the right reasons.

Senator DONNELLY. Exactly.

Dr. JUNOR. But you are right. We have to figure out what is working, what is not, and hone in on them.

And you are very right, going back to that garrison mindset that we had before these complex conflicts, where commanders knew the folks under their command, almost like a familiar relationship, and so they knew signs of stress early on and were able to encourage that help-seeking behavior. I think that is what we are all looking to go back to.

Times have changed. The millennials are different. But I think we are moving in that direction.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you.

Ms. Wada, thank you for being here. I was fortunate enough to serve with Ms. Wada over at the House. We worked together, traveled overseas to see our troops together. I want to thank you for your efforts here.

Having that background, how critical do you think it is to ensure transparency and timeliness in your dealings with this committee and with Congress? And can we count on you to do that?

Ms. WADA. Sir, you certainly can.

Senator DONNELLY. Okay. And, additionally, one of the things that we have been blessed with is having military fellows in our office. And this year we have an Army fellow who is an NCO. And in a town where there are so many officers, it is a refreshing perspective to have.

And we were wondering about the Army's commitment to trying to have a real diverse group of people be part of the fellows program.

Ms. WADA. Sir, if confirmed, I understand that the Army has initiated a diverse fellowship program, and I would assume that it would continue.

Senator DONNELLY. Okay.

And then, one other question for you, and that is, how do we maintain a high level of readiness in the Guard as we go through decreasing budgets, decreasing deployments? You have this balancing act, and how do we keep our Guard sharp and ready at the same time that we balance the needs of the Army?

Ms. WADA. Sir, at this point, I am not sure that I could answer that question specifically. If confirmed, I think I would say that I would work with the Secretary, obviously, the Secretary of Defense, and the Congress to make sure we have a balanced approach to our Armed Forces, to make sure it is a comprehensive total force.

Senator DONNELLY. I think you are going to see in this position that that is one of the things you will be spending an amazing amount of time on, trying to get that right, and trying to make sure that we take a forward look at what we are going to need, how we are going to implement, how do we use our Guard and Reserves after these many, many years.

And so we have great confidence in your ability to do that, but I think that is going to be a big portion of your time.

Mr. Tanner, I wanted to ask you about privacy protection for servicemembers seeking mental health support.

One of the concerns that servicemembers have had over the years is, if they go seek to talk to somebody, feel like they are having some personal challenges, there has been a real hesitancy to do that, thinking, "I might not be able to get to the next step in the rung on promotion. People may look at me a little different."

And you have a unique position that can have an effect on this, so I was wondering your views on how we maintain the privacy protection of our servicemembers while still making sure that they are willing to talk to us to seek help.

Mr. TANNER. The Air Force encourages its members who are dealing with tough issues, whether they are mental health issues or other related issues, to seek counsel and advice from peers, from trained professionals, from its leaders.

The Air Force, if confirmed, I would work very hard with the leadership to ensure that not only are all current laws fully enforced, and that there be training on those laws about privacy protections for members and, in some instances, their dependents, but to enhance those to encourage that full and free flow of information.

Senator DONNELLY. The last thing we want to see is somebody who is struggling be hesitant to seek help, because they are worried about, "Will people start to look at me sideways because of this?"

My feeling is, if they are struggling and they go seek help, that is a positive thing, as opposed to any type of black mark on their career.

Mr. TANNER. Yes, sir. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with you and this committee, if changes were necessary to the present law to increase the opportunity for that engagement.

Senator DONNELLY. Great.

And, in conclusion, I want to thank all of you again for stepping up to serve your country.

And to all the families, thank you for your family's sacrifices. This is very, very important work you are going to be doing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Donnelly.

We are all set?

Okay, we thank you all for your testimony, for your willingness to serve, for your patriotism, for your family's support. We thank them, including some children who were attempting very hard to look interested. [Laughter.]

Chairman LEVIN. It is really important, and I hope the kids understand how important it is that they be here, and how grateful their mom is for their being here today.

Now if they are here instead of school, then maybe I will be less flattering. But my hunch is they are done with school for the year, is that correct?

Senator DONNELLY. Mr. Chairman, do you have authority to write a note, just in case? [Laughter.]

Chairman LEVIN. I think you just gave me authority to write a note, just in case. I don't know if I have it, but I do now.

Thank you all, and we will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:51 a.m., the committee adjourned.]