

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Ms. Brenda Sue Fulton
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))?

It is my understanding that, if confirmed as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, I will serve as the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense and Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness on all matters regarding military and civilian personnel programs and policies, Reserve Component affairs and integration, military community and family policy, and Total Force manpower issues. The ASD(M&RA) also has direct oversight and responsibility for the Defense Commissary Agency and the Department of Defense Education Activity.

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

Across my career, I have accumulated a breadth of leadership experience, having served in the military, worked in the private sector, launched and led nonprofit organizations, and, in my present capacity, served in state government. In my current job, we transformed a hidebound, primarily analog system where customers “stand in line to stand in line” for in-person services to a mostly automated regime where about 80% of transactions are available online, and in-person services are governed by appointments, text reminders, and an automated queuing system. I have worked with senior military leaders in every branch on multiple initiatives to increase diversity in the force, expanding opportunities for women, LGBT Americans, and Black Americans. In every case, my guiding light was an effort to improve our ability to fight and win wars. In my eight years on the West Point Board of Visitors, five of them serving as Chair or Vice Chair, I had the good fortune to work with Lt. Gen. Bob Caslen, my friend Rep. Steve Womack, and other Board members in fighting sexual harassment and assault; expanding the diversity of our entering classes; and most of all, centering character development as a way to deliver the Army the best leaders possible. As an Army veteran and West Point graduate, I deeply love our Armed Forces and the values we represent, and will strive to continue to make those forces stronger, smarter, and more effective – the envy of the world.

Major Challenges and Priorities

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

Our military faces an incredibly dynamic threat environment, with disruptive technologies and powerful adversaries. I believe that the primary challenge in this role will be to deliver a smarter force. That means attracting smart people – and retaining our best talent.

We know from research that smart, talented, innovative people want to work in places where they are (a) given challenging, meaningful opportunities that align with their talents; (b) part of a diverse and inclusive environment; and (c) led by leaders of character.

That means we must also make significant progress in ending sexual harassment and assault in the military.

And if we are to retain those people, especially in the military ranks, we must do a better job taking care of their families.

I believe these are our greatest challenges, and if confirmed, I will do everything within my power to succeed against them.

Civilian Control of the Military

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

If confirmed, I will serve as a principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness on matters regarding military and civilian personnel programs and policies, Reserve Component affairs and integration, military community and family policy, and Total Force manpower issues. I will, if confirmed, strive to provide sound guidance and recommendations regarding the impact of policies and decisions on the Department's workforce, both civilian and military, the Reserve Component and our military families.

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

Our military and civilian personnel are vital to achieving the Department's mission. Since nearly all decisions made regarding U.S. defense and national security impact them, it is necessary to include the ASD(M&RA) when discussions or debates related to personnel occur. If confirmed, I will actively engage on matters within my portfolio and provide the best information and advice possible.

Personnel Policy Implementation

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

If confirmed, I would first seek to learn much more about the pressing challenges that face our people before taking any action. We must always strive for a smarter, stronger, more effective force; it is my opinion that we attract and retain talent by

taking care of our people and their families, by offering challenging and meaningful opportunities, fostering a diverse and inclusive environment, and putting leaders of character in place at every level. However, I believe in making decisions based on evidence and data, and if confirmed, I would seek the best information before pushing for change.

7. 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 understanding is that, if confirmed, I will implement all personnel policies in my area of responsibility as directed by law, and be responsive to this and other Congressional committees on requests for information and reporting requirements, as appropriate.

Non-Deployable Service members

8. 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?

I understand that it is Department policy to maximize the lethality and readiness of the joint force and all Service members are expected to be deployable. It is also my understanding that Service members who are considered non-deployable for more than 12 consecutive months require a retention determination from their Military Department, not mandatory separation. In my view these individuals should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if continued service is appropriate.

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

I would expect the Secretaries of the Military Departments to evaluate each individual on a case-by-case basis. Considerations should include the individual’s ability to perform appropriate military duties commensurate with his/her office, grade, rank or skill as well as the likelihood that the Service member will resolve the condition or reason that is the underlying cause of the non-deployable status.

10. In your view, how should this policy be applied to service members with HIV?

In my view, Service members should be evaluated individually on a case-by-case basis; impartial treatment, regardless of the medical condition at issue, is critical.

The new Department of Defense policy on service by transgender persons, as set forth in DOD Instruction 1300.28, provides that “any determination that a transgender Service member is non-deployable at any time will be consistent with established Military

Department and Service standards, as applied to other Service members whose deployability is similarly affected in comparable circumstances unrelated to gender transition.”

11. Please provide an example of a “comparable circumstance” that would be used to determine deployability of a transgender service member.

It would not be appropriate for me to speculate at this time as this is a very individualized policy. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring Service members are treated fairly, in an environment affording everyone dignity and respect.

12. On average, how long should a commander of a service member undergoing a gender transition expect that service member to be non-deployable?

I do not think it is appropriate to speculate on the timeline as every case is highly individualized. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely on this matter with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs and medical professionals within the Department.

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

I do not have enough information to provide a thorough assessment at this time. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Military Departments to review policies and procedures as appropriate to ensure the lethality and readiness of the joint force.

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

I do not currently have access to DoD data regarding the challenges of medical non-deployability in the reserve components. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues in the Military Departments to address any challenges that are identified.

Diversity and Inclusion

15. In general, what is your assessment of the diversity of the U.S. armed forces and of the DOD civilian workforce?

It is my understanding that, although there is room for improvement, the Department and the Military Departments continue to work toward improving diversity through a number of ongoing initiatives. If confirmed, I will continue to support and, where necessary, expand diversity initiatives to achieve greater representation in the Armed Forces and the DoD civilian workforce.

16. According to researchers at the RAND Corporation, African American and Hispanic youth are less likely to be eligible for military service than white and Asian Americans. Why do you think this is the case?

I am not familiar with the referenced RAND study. I believe, however, that although eligibility standards should be based on operational requirements, these standards should be as broad and inclusive as possible.

17. In your judgement, should military accession and commissioning standards be modified to achieve racial diversity goals? Please explain your answer.

I believe the qualification standards should ensure our military force remains unmatched in the world and that individuals who join can meet the high standards and demands the mission requires. These standards should ensure we are able to recruit the best and brightest of America's youth while also ensuring our armed forces are diverse and representative of the society they serve.

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

I understand that the diversity and inclusion initiatives that the Department and the Military Departments are currently working on underscore the Department's commitment to diversity, including in senior ranks. I believe these initiatives will provide a framework to remove barriers and facilitate greater diversity in all ranks. If confirmed, I will continue to support and, where necessary, expand these initiatives to help improve the diversity among senior leaders.

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

If confirmed, I will support and seek to expand, if necessary, current diversity initiatives to achieve greater representation at the senior General Schedule and Senior Executive levels.

20. If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to increase geographical diversity in the armed forces, especially from areas of the country and local communities that are currently underrepresented?

Unfortunately, many of today's youth do not have family or other mentor connections to the military that promote an understanding of what military service offers. This is particularly true in more remote and isolated communities. I believe broad, expansive communication efforts and strategic messaging are a crucial part of educating all youth about the opportunities that come with military service. If confirmed, I will

strive to ensure proactive engagement with community leaders to ensure accurate perceptions of military service and the significant opportunities it provides.

Extremism

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

It is my view that the majority of military personnel and civilian employees take their Oath to the U.S. Constitution seriously and serve our Nation honorably. Unfortunately, there may be a small number of individuals who choose to align themselves with extremist ideologies and have an outsized impact among the Force. This has no place in our military and should not be tolerated.

22. If confirmed, what would you direct the Military Services to do to eliminate extremism within the ranks?

If confirmed, I will put into action the recommendations and best practices from the Department's review of this issue this past summer. As I understand, that work focused on improvements to policy, training and education, and screening processes to prevent and respond to any emergent threats.

The current DOD policy on "Handling Dissident and Protest Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces" prohibits service members from "active participation" in organizations "that advocate supremacist, extremist, or criminal gang doctrine, ideology, or causes; including those that attempt to create illegal discrimination based on race, creed, color, sex, religion, ethnicity, or national origin . . ."

23. Do you believe that service members who are active participants in religious or political groups that advocate for socially conservative changes to laws related to marriage and gender should be punished, counseled, or prohibited from military service?

I believe that Service members, as long as they act within the confines of federal law and DoD policy, should be allowed to exercise their First Amendment rights of free speech and to observe the tenets of their religion.

Military Service Academies

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

Diversity within the officer corps is essential to both the Department's current mission and to developing our future leaders. Accordingly, it is imperative to ensure diverse talent is found within the applicant pool and student population of our

accession programs, such as the Military Service Academies. While I was on the Board of Visitors for West Point, I was a strong advocate for increasing diversity in the incoming classes. I understand the value of increasing DoD's minority and female accession rates to maintaining a strong and lethal force. If confirmed, I will strive to improve DoD's marketing, recruitment, and community partnership efforts to help the Military Service Academies establish a more diverse pool of applicants.

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

Unfortunately, the Department has more work to do in the prevention of sexual assault and harassment, as well as stopping all forms of retaliation, including from peers and supervisors. If confirmed, I will continue the work of the Department to ensure victims feel comfortable coming forward to report sexual assault and harassment without fear of retaliation. Furthermore, if confirmed I will work to ensure the Military Service Academies appropriately address and prevent all forms of unacceptable behaviors, including retaliatory behaviors.

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

I know, from my time in the U.S. Army and my work with West Point cadets, junior officers, and enlisted members, our youngest troops are often at highest risk. We must carefully consider the cadet and midshipmen population in the Department's efforts to address suicide. I am committed to the welfare of our military community, which includes the future leaders at our Military Service Academies. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues who oversee the suicide prevention programs and assess their efficacy in my endeavor to care for the military community at large, including cadets and midshipmen.

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

As a graduate of West Point, I am familiar with the five-year minimum active-duty service obligation for Military Service Academy graduates that has been in effect for many years. If confirmed, I will assess the existing service obligation policies to evaluate if the U.S. military and American taxpayers are receiving an acceptable return on their investment.

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

I firmly believe the Military Service Academies produce high-quality commissioned officers and leaders. If confirmed, I will examine the resources provided to the Military Service Academies to ensure they are efficiently used and maximized to the greatest benefit for the Department and the Nation.

29. Under what conditions would you deem it appropriate, if confirmed, to permit a military officer to play professional sports prior to completing at least two consecutive years of commissioned service following graduation from the United States Military Academy?

I am aware that there has been a relatively small number of talented cadets and midshipmen who have received approval to participate in professional sports prior to serving at least two consecutive years of commissioned service following their graduation from a Military Service Academy. If confirmed, I will analyze the current policy on professional sport participation for Military Service Academy graduates, and will work with Department leadership to determine if there is a need to propose changes to the Secretary concerning the current policy.

Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (SROTC)

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

It is my understanding that SROTC is the largest source of commissioned officers. If confirmed, I will evaluate the Department's policies and procedures to maximize efficiencies.

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

SROTC units are hosted at a number of geographically and culturally diverse institutions across the United States. It is my understanding that these civilian institutions facilitate a diverse cadet and midshipmen pool. If confirmed, I will evaluate those institutions that draw from diverse and underrepresented populations and strive to improve DoD's marketing, recruitment, and community partnership efforts to encourage a more diverse applicant pool.

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

If confirmed, I intend to review our policies concerning SROTC units that may be having difficulty meeting annual commissioning requirements, as well as examining the conditions and challenges faced by such units. In consultation with Congress, I

will explore ways to get the best out of current SROTC programs and not lose representation in certain geographical areas.

33. How would you modify the SROTC scholarship program to attract the top talent that our armed forces need to meet national defense?

There are SROTC programs at some of the top-rated colleges and universities in the United States. If confirmed, I will stress the importance and value of recruiting efforts at every participating college and university. In addition, I will encourage an increased effort at some of the underused locations.

Military Compensation

34. 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. Military pay and benefits have to be competitive with salaries and benefits in the private sector so the Department can recruit and retain the high-quality men and women the nation needs to fill the ranks of its military.

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

It is my understanding that today's military compensation package is considered robust and compares very favorably with the private-sector. If confirmed, I will continuously evaluate the full range of pay and benefits to ensure they are adequate to recruit and retain the most talented people our country has to offer for service in the Armed Forces.

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

I do not have any specific changes to military pay and benefits that I'd recommend at this time. However, if confirmed, I will be eager to work with Congress on issues surrounding military pay and benefits and will be more than open to considering potential options for change. Above all, however, my goal would be that we only seek changes that maintain readiness, as well as our ability to recruit, retain, and sustain the All-Volunteer Force.

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

I am aware that recent growth in military personnel costs is an ongoing source of concern. I believe we have to look for processes that improve efficiencies and

support controlling costs. If confirmed, I will work with Congress to ensure any future military pay or benefit change is justified and enhances our ability to recruit, retain, and sustain the Force while remaining cost-efficient.

Recruiting and Retention

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

I am aware that some of the main reasons today's youth are ineligible for military service are medical issues, such as obesity, drug use, and past conduct issues, to include illegal activity and associated proceedings. I believe that the low eligibility rates are a national, not just a DoD, concern. If confirmed, I will work to improve the recruiting pool. I believe the Department can improve the propensity for military service among today's youth by working to eliminate misperceptions, and reaffirming the value of military service through positive messaging and strategic engagements.

39. 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?

My understanding is that the low propensity to serve is due in large part to the increasing disconnect between civilians and the military, misperceptions and lack of knowledge about military service, and the shrinking Veteran population. If confirmed, I will focus on shifting the views and perceived value of military service.

40. Do you believe that non-native English speakers are disadvantaged in qualifying for military service by the current testing process?

The ability to communicate and understand the English language is critical for success in the military. I understand that the Military Services use recruiting programs directed at non-native English speakers, providing them with the highest potential for success. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Military Services to ensure the Department utilizes the most modern assessment tools that provide the broadest possible opportunity for today's youth.

41. If confirmed, how would you address any such disadvantages to increase the pool of eligible and interested youth?

If confirmed, I will ensure the Department utilizes modern marketing and advertising methods to reach a diverse and qualified pool of eligible applicants and that eligibility standards result in optimum fit between service demands and member capabilities.

42. In your view, should existing medical and other qualification standards be reconsidered to accommodate youth willing to enlist for service in certain high-

demand specialties, such as remotely piloted aircraft pilots or the cyber workforce?

I am not familiar with the specific qualification standards for military service but, if confirmed, I will work with the Military Services to ensure that qualification standards are appropriate, while still ensuring that Service members can complete their required training and deploy world-wide on a moment's notice to fight and win our nation's wars.

Military Accessions Vital to National Interest Program

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

It is my understanding that the MAVNI program mostly provided the Military Services with critical language speakers and those with various medical specialties. I am also aware that legislation enacted in recent years greatly limits the use of such a program, but the Department recruits large numbers of Lawful Permanent Residents each year, greatly contributing to the diverse language capabilities of the Department.

44. In your view, was the program effective in helping the Department to recruit for certain hard-to-fill specialties?

I am not sufficiently familiar with the details of the program to answer this, but understand that lawful permanent residents positively contribute to the Military Services and fill important positions that are challenging for the Military Services to fill.

45. If confirmed, would you recommend reactivating the MAVNI program and authorize the enlistment of new applicants? If so, conditions would you impose on program operations, particularly as regards applicant security, suitability, and reliability screening?

If confirmed, I will review the history of the program and look for ways in which we can effectively fill critical but challenging-to-recruit vacancies within existing authorities. I am aware that legislation enacted in recent years greatly limits the use of such a program.

Reserve Components

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

I understand the members of our Reserve Components have responded admirably to the numerous missions they have supported around the world and here at home; however, I am unaware of the impact of those operational requirements on recruiting and retention. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Military Departments and Services to ensure the Department can recruit and retain an effective Reserve force.

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

In my view, the Reserve Component is no longer solely a strategic force and is increasingly relied on as part of the total operational force. If confirmed, I will work with the Military Departments and the Military Services to ensure the Reserve Component is appropriately and equitably resourced with the equipment, facilities, and training needed to meet total force requirements.

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

In my view, providing a continuity of service option between the Active and Reserve Components improves recruiting and retention of talent. If confirmed, I will review the current policies to transition between the Active and Reserve Components to identify any shortfalls and successes, and work with the Military Departments and Services, as well as Congress, as appropriate, to improve permeability.

49. In your view, are the current requirements for becoming a Joint Qualified Officer appropriate for reserve component officers? If not, how should requirements be revised to better meet the needs of reserve component officers?

It is my understanding that officer careers are closely managed to meet Military Department requirements. If confirmed, I will work to ensure joint qualification requirements for both active and reserve component officers are reasonable and enhance an officer's professional abilities.

50. In your view, is the current professional military education system appropriate for the Reserve components? If not, what changes would you recommend?

If confirmed, I will review the state of the professional military education system for the Reserve Components to ensure that for any areas not appropriate for Service members in the Reserve force, we work to make the necessary changes to the system. My review would also seek to ensure that there are processes that allow for the

continuous improvement of professional military education system to meet the unique considerations of Service members in the Reserve Component.

Military Quality of Life

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

If I am confirmed, programs that enhance the well-being and resilience of Service members and their families will be among my top priorities. I support critical programs such as spouse education and employment support; military family life counseling; MWR and resale programs; fitness; and quality child care. In my view, these programs enrich military family readiness, which is crucial to mission readiness.

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

If confirmed, I will evaluate the metrics and measures for essential MWR and quality of life programs. I will also review MWR programs and funding policies to ensure they are adequately funded and meet the needs of Service member and families. I believe these programs are an essential part of maintaining Total Force fitness, because they impact the readiness, recruitment, and retention of personnel and lead to increased physical and mental well-being.

Military Family Readiness and Support

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

My understanding is that spouse employment and child care are two of the most important family readiness issues for Service members and their families. The lack of child care availability and spouse unemployment, or underemployment, can have significant negative impacts on the financial readiness of Service members and their families. In addition, these readiness issues may also lead to retention problems, as they impact a family's satisfaction with military life. If confirmed, I will work to address these crucial issues.

54. 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 strive to ensure our military families have access to affordable, quality child care. Child care is a critical mission readiness issue and important to ensuring the economic viability of military families. I will work with Department

leadership, as well as continuously seeking feedback from our military families, to determine where challenges exist and find ways to improve this mission critical service.

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

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

In my view, DoDEA schools provide an excellent education that rivals the best public schools in the country. This should never change because military dependents deserve the best education the Department can provide.

56. In your view, are DODEA's administrative overhead costs, meaning its funding and employment above the school level, comparable to those found in high quality public school districts in the United States?

It is my understanding that DoDEA has been subject to Headquarters staffing reviews and reductions more than once. Although I do not presently have access to the analysis, I am aware that DoDEA's overhead is now lower than that of comparable public school systems.

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

I do not currently know enough about DoDEA eligibility requirements to offer an informed opinion on potential modifications. If confirmed, I will work closely with Congress to ensure that DoDEA has the resources and authorities that may be needed in the future.

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

I am aware that DoDEA was able to quickly adapt its education program during the COVID-19 pandemic by incorporating remote learning nearly immediately. If confirmed, I will build on this momentum for using technology and adaptive curriculum to meet every student's needs and support success no matter where they are located.

59. Do you believe that DODEA should further expand its capabilities to deliver online education in the future?

Yes. I am aware that the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 directed DoDEA to conduct a pilot program to expand access to its virtual school. If

confirmed, I look forward to learning more about DoDEA's implementation of this pilot.

60. How can these programs be improved?

I have not reviewed the performance goals and metrics for DoDEA. I look forward to doing so if confirmed, after which I may have additional thoughts.

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

The Department must ensure that all students and staff are ready for an active shooter incident. Training and procedural compliance will be key in preparing for such an event. If confirmed, I will ensure DoDEA continues to monitor security threats and update response plans as needed.

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

I do not have enough information to make such an assessment at this time. I believe the Department must be a good custodian of taxpayer resources and it also has an obligation to invest deliberately and responsibly in the students it serves. I believe that means if a school system is to maintain high levels of student achievement, it must be well-resourced and have an appropriate number of teachers in each school. If confirmed, I will review the resource requirements of DoDEA to ensure the Department meets these obligations.

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

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

I am aware that DoDEA uses effective tracking and reporting processes which assist the organization to prevent and, when necessary to respond to unlawful discrimination throughout DoDEA schools. If confirmed, I plan to continue to work to ensure that all such allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment are appropriately addressed.

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

Although I do not know the details, I am aware that DoDEA requires the documentation of substantiated misconduct be included in a student's record. If

confirmed, I will thoroughly review DoDEA's process and make appropriate adjustments if necessary.

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

If confirmed, I will review the policies currently in place, making any needed adjustments to ensure sexual assault, sexual harassment, and unlawful discrimination, are not tolerated in DoDEA. When allegations are made, they will be investigated and, if substantiated, the responsible individual(s) will be held appropriately accountable.

65. In your view, should the quality and availability of local public education factor into Department and military service basing decisions?

Yes. If confirmed, I will thoroughly examine how the quality and availability of local public education are considered in basing decisions. I will work with stakeholders to implement any needed actions required to ensure access to high quality education for military dependents.

Community Support for Military Families with Special Needs

66. If confirmed, how would you ensure that service members with special needs family members relocate to new duty stations where services are available to address the special needs of members of that family?

If confirmed, I will thoroughly examine this important issue. Supporting all our Service members and families is critical to the recruitment, readiness, and retention of the force. I will review policies and procedures to better understand the process in which Service members with special needs family members are assigned to new duty stations and see where we can improve this process for special needs families.

67. If confirmed, how would you ensure outreach to those military families with special needs dependents so they are able to obtain the support they need?

I do not have enough information at this time to adequately comment on the current outreach efforts of the Department. However, if confirmed, I am committed to providing support to military families that have family members with special needs. This includes making sure all families know about the support services available to them. If confirmed, I will work to better understand how the Department is meeting the needs of these important members of our military community and in which areas we can improve.

Morale, Welfare, and Recreation

68. If confirmed, what challenges do you foresee in sustaining MWR programs in the constrained fiscal environment of the Department?

If confirmed, I am committed to protecting the funding support for both appropriated and nonappropriated funds that I believe are integral to the successful sustainment of MWR programs. I will review the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on MWR programs, and I will study the long-term fiscal challenges impacting the ability to deliver products and services efficiently and effectively to Service members, retirees, and their families.

Commissary and Military Exchange Systems

69. What is your view of the need for modernization of business policies and practices in the commissary and exchange systems?

I fully support the modernization of commissary and exchange policies and business practices to ensure they are timely; relevant to the environment in which we operate; responsive to changes in that environment; and effective in meeting the needs for which they were developed. If confirmed, I will ensure the commissary and exchange systems are utilizing cutting-edge policies and practices, as the resale system is an important non-pay benefit contributing to the readiness of our military members and their families.

70. What are the most promising avenues for change to achieve these modernization goals?

It is my understanding that the Department recently completed an update of its Business Case Analysis involving the commissary and exchange systems. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the results and promoting even greater levels of collaboration and modernization in the commissary and exchange systems.

71. What should the Department do to make the commissary system more self-sustaining?

The commissary system is an invaluable benefit to our Service members and their families, which proved even more critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. If confirmed, I will assess and support efforts to better balance the delivery of the commissary benefit with funding sources in accordance with Department guidance.

72. What is your view of proposals to consolidate, eliminate, or privatize commissaries and exchanges in certain areas where they are duplicative of services readily available at reasonable cost in the community?

It is my understanding that military members and their families consider the commissary and exchange benefits to be two of the most valuable benefits the

Department provides. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the information on such proposals, so I can carefully consider any impacts or risks before commenting on any proposals regarding consolidation, elimination, or privatization.

Department of Defense Civilian Workforce Matters

73. 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 talent?

I have not been in a position to become aware of the civilian workforce's morale, or the Department's ability to successfully recruit top talent. If I am confirmed, this will be an important focus of my portfolio and I will work closely with other DoD leaders to address it, as appropriate.

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

Although I am not aware of all the possible challenges facing the DoD in managing its civilian workforce, I expect that, like for many complex and technical organizations, the competition for highly skilled talent is a major undertaking. If confirmed, I will work closely with stakeholders across the Department to assess workforce challenges, and develop the strategies to address them where necessary.

75. What is your view of both the favorable and adverse effects that borrowed military manpower can have on participating military personnel and on the performance of civilian functions?

I believe it is important for the Military Departments to have the flexibility they need to successfully execute their missions, and borrowed military manpower can be a part of that equation. My primary concern about this practice is the potential impact on operational readiness if it were relied upon too often to fill gaps. If confirmed, I will work with the Military Departments to ensure that their end strength is adequate to accomplish all assigned missions.

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

I am not yet familiar with the A-76 process or the reasoning behind the moratorium, but it is my understanding that the A-76 process itself is widely considered flawed by both the public and the private sectors. I believe it is important for the Department to have flexibility to meet its mission requirements in a manner that optimizes its resources. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts in the Department to

understand the impact of the moratorium and gauge if there is a need to reconsider its usefulness.

77. The Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act required the Department of Defense to implement a probationary period of at least 2 years for new civilian employees. How does this requirement benefit the Department, in your view?

I do not currently have access to the details regarding the Department's implementation of this provision, or how it has benefited the Department. If confirmed, I will review current personnel policies to assess their effectiveness and propose changes where necessary.

78. In your view, what role should the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower & Reserve Affairs play in establishing the "return to work" policies for DOD civilians who have been operating in a "telework" environment for lengthy periods of time due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

With its responsibility for directing policies affecting the DoD workforce, I believe the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower & Reserve Affairs should play a critical role in developing "return to work" and "telework" policies, while considering the input of DoD leaders and employees in shaping the right policies for the Department.

79. In your view, what challenges will this "return to work" effort engender and how would you address each of these challenges, if confirmed?

While I am not currently aware of the challenges that might arise from a "return to work" effort, I will, if confirmed, work closely with DoD leaders and stakeholders to assess any challenges, and develop strategies to address them, as appropriate.

Cyber Workforce

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

I believe that there is no specific optimal "mix" of military and civilian personnel for the cyber workforce, and that any such mix should be based on the requirements, nature of the work, and cost factors that are unique to an organization and the mission it performs. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts in the Department to ensure that leaders in cyber and other functional workforces have the authorities and flexibilities needed to optimize the mix of military and civilian personnel to achieve success.

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

I do not have enough information at this time to comment on the effectiveness of the Cyber Excepted Service, but I understand that the DoD Chief Information Officer (CIO) has a role in overseeing its implementation and evaluation. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues in the DoD CIO's office to ensure the Department is meeting requirements for a highly qualified and competent cyber workforce.

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

To mitigate any cyber workforce capacity and capability gaps, if confirmed, I would work with my colleagues in the Office of the DoD CIO to assess workforce data, identify staffing and competency requirements to meet current and future mission needs, and develop talent management strategies and policies to build workforce capacity and capability where identified gaps exist.

Technical Workforce

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

I believe it is critical to have active-duty military personnel trained and working in STEM and other technical positions across the Department. Active-duty military personnel bring knowledge, skills, and perspectives to such efforts that their civilian counterparts may not possess. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts across the Department to ensure that the talents of our active-duty and Reserve Component personnel are being harnessed appropriately in concert with their civilian counterparts.

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

I understand that DoD's science, technology, and engineering workforce, including those in the DoD laboratories, are critical to the advancement of the Department's research and development mission. If confirmed, I would work with my colleagues in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research & Engineering, as well as the Military Departments, to ensure all civilian workforce management tools and flexibilities are available to the Directors of DoD laboratories to the greatest extent possible for their use in attracting, retaining, and shaping their science, technology, and engineering workforces.

Senior Executive Service

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

I believe that those selected for appointment to the Senior Executive Service must be innovative, capable of managing complex systems and organizations, and possess the ability to lead and develop a globally relevant workforce for the future. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department's leadership models are focused on these core principles for shaping a high-performing civilian workforce.

- 86. 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 communicate to the SES members under my authority clear and measurable performance expectations that include standards for both organizational outcomes and effective leadership for achieving a high performing subordinate workforce.

Acquisition Workforce

- 87. In your view, in what ways can DOD better train military personnel to be acquisition professionals?**

I believe that a highly trained acquisition workforce is a key component of keeping the Department competitive and on the cutting edge in the 21st century. It is my understanding that this issue primarily falls under the purview of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, but if confirmed, I will work with my counterpart in that office to ensure that they have the personnel-related authorities and flexibilities they need to succeed in building the acquisition workforce.

- 88. What role should the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower & Reserve Affairs play in developing, executing, and overseeing such training, in your view?**

It is my understanding that training military personnel, including acquisition professionals, falls primarily under the purview of the Military Services to organize,

train, and equip. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts in the Services to ensure they have the authorities and flexibilities they need to be successful in continuing to build a world-class acquisition community.

89. How can acquisition workforce management policies be modified to make leaders accountable for cost overruns on procurement contracts?

I understand that matters regarding cost overruns on procurement contracts fall under the purview of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues in that office to assess the effectiveness of acquisition workforce management policies in holding leaders appropriately accountable.

90. In your judgment, what factors should program offices consider in determining which tasks are best accomplished by civilian employees, military personnel, or support contractors?

I believe it is important for program offices to consider the nature of specific functions when applying statutory and regulatory criteria to determine the appropriate workforce mix. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts across the Department, and especially with leaders in the fields of Acquisition and Sustainment, to ensure that these considerations are fully integrated into the Department's workforce decision-making processes.

Laboratory, Science and Technology, and Test Range STEM Personnel

91. If confirmed, how would you ensure the maximum use of personnel flexibilities provided by Congress to improve the quality of the Department of Defense's STEM workforce?

If confirmed, I would work with my colleagues in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, as well as the Military Departments, to provide awareness and training for supervisors and human resources staff on personnel flexibilities provided by Congress that are available for the improvement of the DoD STEM workforce.

92. If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure that such personnel flexibilities can be employed at the lowest appropriate level?

If confirmed, I would work with my colleagues to encourage and develop policies that would allow for the delegation of flexibilities for use by managers and supervisors at the lowest appropriate level.

STEM Educational Opportunities for Military Dependents

93. In your view, what role should the Military Departments play in supporting STEM educational opportunities for military children?

I understand that OSD and the other DoD Components, including the Military Departments, are invested in developing current and future STEM talent throughout DoD to meet its unique mission. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues across the Department to ensure and expand STEM opportunities for military children.

94. If confirmed, how would you work with the Department of Defense research and development organizations to increase STEM educational opportunities for children of military personnel?

The exceptional scientists and engineers in the Department of Defense are the reason the United States of America is a world leader in science and technologies that are critical to our national security. I understand that the Department is cultivating the future STEM workforce by providing unique education opportunities to students and educators of all ages and across all demographics throughout the country. If confirmed, I will support these efforts which are vitally important to maintaining our Nation's competitive advantage, ensuring we are prepared for the ever-changing global landscape.

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.

95. 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

96. 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

97. 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

98. 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

99. 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

100. 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

101. 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