

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

Duties and Qualifications

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

The duties and functions of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs are to serve as the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense, Deputy Secretary of Defense and Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, with responsibility for overall policies and procedures of Total Force manpower, personnel and reserve affairs to include the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and Coast Guard Reserve. As part of the critical duties of this position is the responsibility to coordinate across the Department of Defense, the Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, the Military Services as well as Congress and other appropriate stakeholders to set the conditions for a sustainable, seamlessly integrated and complementary total force.

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

For the better part of my 30-year professional career I have focused my efforts on developing and managing a wide variety of quality of life programs that directly and positively impacted our Service members and their families. Programs ranging from drug demand reduction, , transition assistance, SHARP, ESGR, mental health counseling and support of the wounded, ill and injured population, among others, have provided me with a deep, diverse and relevant skill set. Under the Obama Administration I had the honor to serve as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) where I had oversight responsibility for quality-of-life program policy issues which are even more critical in today's environment.

Major Challenges and Priorities (Ron)

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

As the world recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic the Department of Defense is faced with a number of major challenges. Among the top issues the Department faces are those which fall within the purview of the M&RA, including recruitment and propensity to serve, as well as retention issues including compensation, spouse employment, and access to affordable childcare.

If confirmed as the ASD (M&RA) I would work closely with the experts in the ASD offices, the Services as well as other stakeholders, including Congress, to address each of these important issues.

Civilian Control of the Military

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

I believe civilian control is a fundamental tenant of our successful democracy, and it cannot just be present at the highest level. If confirmed I will support and advance the principle of civilian control of the armed forces in my words and actions. I will, as I always have, seek the advice and counsel of military and career civil servants, as well as fellow appointees. But in the end, I realize that decisions must be made and oftentimes those are to be made by the civilian leaders of the department. If confirmed, I will not only support the Secretary and Undersecretary for Personnel and Readiness in their decision-making, I will make those decisions for the M&RA, the easy and difficult ones, with the advice and counsel of our military advisers.

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

If confirmed, I would ensure the ASD(M&RA) maintains an active presence and voice on all matters related to the policies and procedures of the Total Force manpower, personnel and reserve affairs for which I will have oversight. Further, I will strive to maintain an ongoing dialogue with my counterparts across the Department of Defense, the Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, and the Services while always providing the best honest and candid advice to the Under Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, and the Secretary of Defense.

Personnel Policy Implementation

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 give significant attention to the long-term recruiting challenges that face the Department. While I understand that it is primarily the responsibility of the Military Services to recruit and train, I recognize that there are roles that OSD must perform to better enable success. I believe that we should review the tools that we have to increase propensity to serve in order to achieve our long-term recruitment goals. Similarly, I believe that civilian public service is critical to our national security, and is also an often overlooked career field. It deserves additional focus and outreach.

Within each of the areas above, technology provides us with excellent tools to observe and process mass amounts of data to better understand our workers and recruits' needs

and wants and better compare our efforts to those of other organizations, both government and commercial.

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?

I understand that if confirmed, I not only have a responsibility to the Legislative Branch to inform and consult with Congress and all of the appropriate committees, I consider it smart business to do so. After all, this body holds the direct line to the American public and their input through you, coupled with your experience on these issues is vital to any successful policy that I might implement.

Non-Deployable Service members

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 am aware that all Service members are expected to be deployable and the Department's focus is to maximize the lethality and readiness of the joint force. It is my understanding that the Service members who are considered non-deployable for more than 12 consecutive months require a retention determination from their Military Department. These individuals should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if continued service is appropriate. Not to do so may adversely impact the force readiness and place an undue burden on the remainder of the force.

In your view, 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 believe it is appropriate to evaluate each individual on a case-by-case basis. Factors to consider include the individual's ability to perform his/her military duties as well as the likelihood that the Service member will resolve the condition or reason resulting in the non-deployable status. I believe we must also consider the Service member's role during a deployment. For example, a wounded warrior who continues to serve as a cyber analyst may not be eligible to deploy, but could still fulfill their combat mission. This, among other potential factors, is why the individual's circumstances must be considered on a case-by-case.

The Department of Defense policy on in-service transitions for transgender servicemembers 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."

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

Speculation on my part would not be appropriate due to the highly individualized nature of this policy. If confirmed, I will ensure our policies promote dignity and respect for all Service members.

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

As every case is highly individualized, I do not think it is appropriate to speculate. However, if confirmed, I will address this issue with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs and other medical professionals in the Department.

Diversity and Inclusion

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

I believe that diversity is a strength and directly contributes to readiness. I understand that although the Department is fairly diverse across the board, racial/ethnic minorities and women are still underrepresented among the Armed Forces’ top leadership, compared with the Service members they lead. However, I understand that the Department and the Military Services are implementing initiatives to support a more representative force in the years to come.

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?

As I am unfamiliar with the RAND reports, I am not able to provide a thorough response. However, if confirmed, I commit to working with my staff and the Services, to learn what has already been done in this area and to identify any areas where we can make adjustments to ensure we are drawing from the wealth of diversity that today’s youth have to offer.

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

I believe the Department’s focus needs to remain on ensuring we have the best qualified military in the world while always working towards a diverse and representative force that reflects our society.

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?

The future of the All-Volunteer Force and evolving nature of warfare requires a Total Force comprised of diverse backgrounds and skill sets to effectively support future warfighting missions. If confirmed, I will strive to advance the Department’s mission and the continued need to recruit, develop, and retain top talent.

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 assess the current representation at the senior General Schedule and Senior Executive Service levels, as well as current Department initiatives designed to improve diversity at these levels. As necessary, I will seek to expand these initiatives to promote greater representation in the Department’s senior civilian ranks.

Do you believe diversity goals should be prioritized over merit and performance when considering who should be appointed to senior military and civilian positions?

I believe the Department must recruit and retain a qualified civilian workforce with the right critical skillsets to achieve the Department’s mission, and that qualification standards for our military force must remain unmatched in the world. Civilian and military qualifications and standards should ensure we are able to recruit the best and brightest, while also ensuring our civilian workforce and armed forces are diverse and representative of American society.

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?

If confirmed, I commit to working with my staff, and the Services, to learn what has already been done in this area and to identify any areas where we can make adjustments to ensure we are drawing from the wealth of diversity that today’s youth have to offer.

Extremism

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”

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

I believe that the majority of our Service members and civilians serve our Nation honorably – that includes their conduct after they leave the military. However, any instance of extremist behavior within any organization (no matter how frequent) degrades the overall effectiveness of that organization. Within the armed forces, without a doubt, good order and discipline is compromised when any extremist behavior or activity presents itself. My personal and professional view is there is no place for any extremist behavior or activity within the armed forces.

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

If confirmed, I will meet with the service leaders – civilian, officers and senior enlisted advisors to learn how they presently maintain good order and discipline at all times within the ranks, and where we can help. I will work with my staff and leadership to ensure that the Department continues to focus on keeping the Military Services free from extremist behavior and activity, while maintaining the rights and freedoms for all Service members.

Military Service Academies

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 our Services is critical. The Military Service Academies produce the future leaders of our military; therefore, it is essential the cadets and midshipmen represent the diversity of our great country. If confirmed, I will work with the Services to explore new marketing, recruiting, and community partnering methods to increase the diversity of Military Service Academy applicants.

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?

Any form of sexual assault or harassment hinders mission accomplishment and damages unit cohesion. The Military Service Academies, institutions among the top colleges and universities in the country, should be held to the highest standards of conduct and integrity. If confirmed, I will work with Military Department leadership to make sure that they monitor such behavior to ensure the Military Service Academies swiftly and justly address all forms of inappropriate behaviors.

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

I am aware of recent media reports and understand the Department and Services take this tragic issue very seriously. It has also reached epidemic levels in the United States as suicide rates increased by 30% from 2000-2018. If I am confirmed, I will assess the efficacy of efforts taken to date and engage with the Defense Suicide Prevention Office and Service leaders to look at ways to strengthen suicide prevention programs.

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?

It is my understanding that the current active-duty service commitment for service academy graduates has remained unchanged for many years. If I am confirmed, I will analyze the current obligations, and verify our nation is receiving a high return on this important investment of taxpayer dollars.

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 am unfamiliar with the specifics costs to operate the Military Service Academies, especially in comparison to other accession program costs. However, I am familiar with the excellent reputation of the Service Academies. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the Service Academies' costs and the contributions made by this particular pool of officers.

What is your view of service academy graduates delaying active duty service in order to pursue careers in professional sports?

I'm aware of this issue generally from my past experience in the Department of Defense. If confirmed, I look forward to better understanding the existing policy and recent legislative enactments in this area to determine the appropriate way forward for the Department, Services, cadets/midshipmen, and the American tax payers.

Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (SROTC)

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

While I am not currently well versed in the details of accessions via SROTC, the geographically diverse nature of the SROTC program should provide an officer corps with the wide variety of demographics, backgrounds, and experiences necessary to ensure the continued readiness of the Military Services. If confirmed, I will review the SROTC program to ensure it is an effective and viable source for officer accessions.

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

A diverse force begins at accessions, and SROTC gives the Services the broadest ability to tap into diverse talent across the country. If confirmed, I will review the SROTC programs and ensure the Department continues to focus on increasing the diversity of the officer corps to take full advantage of their talents through opportunities to serve. In addition, I will strive to improve the DoD's marketing, recruitment, and community partnership efforts to encourage a more diverse applicant pool.

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.

I do not have access to the Department's information regarding this issue. If confirmed, I will review the matter and will look for ways to get the most out of current SROTC programs without losing geographical or cultural representation.

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

As I currently understand, we have SROTC programs at some of the best colleges and universities in the United States, providing an opportunity to reach top talent. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and the Services to ensure SROTC scholarship programs are maximally effective at attracting top talent for the nation.

Military Compensation

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. The Military compensation package must primarily be competitive in order to sustain the recruitment and retention of the high caliber men and women willing to serve the Nation in uniform in order to reach and maintain our national defense objectives.

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

While my view into the Department's statistical data is limited, current indications are the overall military compensation levels compare favorably with the private sector. However, if confirmed, I would remain open to increased compensation levels in coordination with the overall balancing of these costs against other critical warfighting and readiness needs of the Force.

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

If confirmed I would work with my team of experts along with the Services to explore alternatives that could positively impact Service members and families, such as more and better access to family care, both child and elder care. Listening to our families is critical to any review and recommendation, but I believe that in this post-COVID environment, families have changed their priorities and we need to be able to adjust benefits to respond.

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

Military personnel costs equate to roughly one-third of the Department's overall budget. Maintaining a balance between personnel costs and other critical warfighting needs is difficult but necessary for maintaining our Total Force, while meeting recruitment goals. One key element of stabilizing military personnel costs, including unemployment costs is maintaining high retention rates. From what I understand, the Services have been fairly successful in this area, but can always improve and this gets back to my point about listening to the families and their needs in terms of benefits restructuring. This could be a way of controlling some larger costs.

Recruiting and Retention (Ron)

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

I believe several factors contribute to the low percentage of 17-34 year olds who are eligible to serve. Among the top reasons for ineligibility are obesity and medical reasons as well as past drug use and criminal records. I understand that the Army and maybe the other Military Services have programs for recruits to "get in shape" and eat healthier in order to meet the enlistment standards. I think this is an important step worth exploring, but we must also conduct outreach sooner in the recruitment process. If confirmed, I will work with the experts in my office, the Military Services as well and other stakeholders, to include Congress, to look into the possibility of outreach programs to help America's youth return to a more fit and healthy lifestyle, while also increasing our outreach in vital education programs as well, such as STEM programs. ASVAB scores are also contributors to the low percentage of persons eligible to serve. All of these issues deserve our long-term attention, and if confirmed they will be an area of focused effort for me.

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

I believe the drop in propensity to serve among our youth is due in large part to the lack of relatability with our Service members and military life in general. The impact of COVID-19 has compounded the issue as Service members were unable to have a presence with youth, teachers, coaches, clergy, etc. that would have assisted in exposing the communities to the military culture.

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

I am not familiar enough with the intimate details of the current testing processes for non-native English speakers. If confirmed, I will fully examine the process to ensure non-native English speakers are not disadvantaged.

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

I believe its imperative that our Armed Forces are a reflection of the society for which they serve to protect and defend. If confirmed, I would work with experts in my office as well as the Military Services to ensure we are recruiting from a broader range of pools across the United States, geographically, demographically and economically. I see this position as removing barriers to anyone that is able and willing to serve.

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 believe, given todays recruiting challenges along with the changing landscape of cyber warfare and other technological advances, that it would be wise to at least consider all aspects of the accessions process.

Military Accessions Vital to National Interest Program

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?

I am unfamiliar with the specific benefits and/or challenges of the MAVNI program. If confirmed, I commit to gaining a better understanding of this program to determine how similar programs may contribute to our national interests. I believe any decision on this program must be centered on maintaining the national security of our country.

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

I am unfamiliar with the specific details of the MAVNI program. If confirmed, I commit to better understanding the program to determine if this program should be reinstated to assist recruiting efforts by enlisting individuals to fill hard-to-fill specialties. I believe any decision on the MAVNI program or any program with similar intent must be centered on maintaining the national security of our country.

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

I am unfamiliar with the specific benefits and/or challenges of the MAVNI program. If confirmed, I commit to gaining a better understanding of this program to determine whether this program should be reinstated, and what security, suitability and reliability screenings should be imposed to ensure the security of our national interests. I believe any decision on this program or programs of similar intent must centered on maintaining the national security of our country.

Reserve Components

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

I am not familiar with the effect increased operational tempo has had on reserve component recruiting and retention, but if confirmed I will work to ensure the Department is able to recruit and retain and effective Reserve force.

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 components are both essential to the operational force and provide strategic depth for the nation. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Reserve components receive the training, equipment, and resources needed to be ready to meet immediate requirements while preparing for future challenges.

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

Offering a seamless way for individuals to move between the Active and Reserve components can enhance the recruitment and retention of highly skilled personnel. If confirmed, I will review the current policies governing this process and collaborate with

the Senate Armed Services Committee to improve transitions between the two components.

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?

I am not that familiar with this process overall. However, it is my understanding that since most reserve component officers perform duty periodically they have found the experienced-based joint duty assignment path more practical for fulfilling joint credit requirements.

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

Professional military education plays a critical role in cultivating our leaders. If confirmed, I will review the state of the professional military education system for the Reserve components to ensure there are processes that allow for the continuous improvement of our people and the education system itself.

Military Quality of Life (Ron)

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

I am a firm believer, from first hand knowledge as a business owner, that childcare is a critical and increasingly important benefit. With that, I believe that emergency or backup care for military families is also needed. Beyond that direct knowledge, I will rely heavily on the voices of military families concerning the prioritization of their needs, as their willingness to continue to serve directly impacts that overall readiness of our force.

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?

As I have previously mentioned, I believe a review of current benefits, including quality of life and MWR benefits, is warranted. That review should be heavily influenced by the voices of our military families, active and reserve. Additionally, while many MWR programs are self or almost self-sustaining, we are still stewards of the resources. I believe its imperative to consider the sustainability of each program, while ensuring it is a value add to the overall compensation package for our Service members and families.

Military Family Readiness and Support (Ron)

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

I believe the most important family readiness issue for Service members and families is access to quality, affordable childcare.

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

If confirmed, I will work with the experts in my office, along with the Services, to conduct an ongoing review of accessibility and affordability to high-quality childcare. It's imperative the Department consider innovative ways to expand access such as implementing emergency backup care, much like leading private industry does.

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

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

In my view, the overall quality of DoD schools is extremely high. According to the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress, DoDEA runs the best school system in the nation. I will continue to support excellence in our schools for military families

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?

From my time as DASD for Military Community and Family Policy, I learned that DoDEA operates in a manner similar to that of both a State Education Agency and a Local Education Agency and saw the start of its "Restructuring for Student Achievement" which was intended to focus more resources at the region and school level. If confirmed, I will look at their progress and ensure we are continuing to provide students with the best education possible, while remaining good stewards of the public resources made available to them.

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 understand that DoDEA recently updated its eligibility policy for the first time in over 10 years. I look forward to reviewing the policy and learning about the law that the policy implements.

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 understand DoDEA operated very effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic and never shut-down their schools after the pandemic hit. I strongly support the continued inclusion of adaptive curriculum and technology to reinforce and improve educational continuity and to provide individualized instruction to meet students' learning needs with what they need no matter where they are located.

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

It is my understanding that DoDEA is currently conducting a pilot program pursuant to section 589D of the FY21 National Defense Authorization Act that expands access to its virtual school to a larger student population. If confirmed, I will learn more about the pilot program and work with DoDEA to direct resources and education tools to reach its students whether in the classroom or in a remote setting.

In your view, can these programs be improved, and if so, what would you recommend?

I am aware that DoDEA is currently operating a pilot program to expand its ability to provide online education to military dependents around the world. If confirmed, I look forward to learning about the pilot program and how it helps our military-connected students.

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

Sadly, all schools must remain prepared for active shooter situations, to include DoDEA schools that operate on installations. Maintaining a key awareness of emergency procedures and conducting regular training and drills are vital to success. If confirmed, I will continue to support all programs intended to ensure student safety.

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 access to the Department's data on this matter in order to make such an assessment at this time. However, I believe that we must continue to invest in our military families through our schools, which includes suitably staffing teaching requirements, and I look forward to supporting this goal, if confirmed.

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, as with all Executive Branch agencies, is required to take reasonable steps to eliminate unlawful discrimination in its schools, programs, activities, and workplaces under Executive Order 13160, “Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Race, Sex, Color, National Origin, Disability, Religion, Age, Sexual Orientation, and Status as a Parent in Federally Conducted Education and Training Programs.” If confirmed, I will continue the work to ensure that the policies and procedures are in place to address allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment, and to hold offenders accountable.

- **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?**

I believe information on substantiated misconduct should be included in a student’s record and transferred to a new school, if or when that occurs. If confirmed, I will review DoDEA’s process and take appropriate action as/if necessary.

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?

The elimination of all types of harassment, assault, and discrimination is a perpetual goal that we must strive to achieve in every corner of the Department, including DoDEA schools. If confirmed, I will review the training materials and resources that DoDEA provides to teachers, staff, and students to guarantee the proper utilization of existing systems, and to ensure that offenders are held responsible when any allegation is substantiated.

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

Yes. Quality and availability of local public education are absolutely essential to military family readiness. If confirmed, I will work with the Services to understand how this should factor into basing decisions.

Community Support for Military Families with Special Needs (Ron)

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?

The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) provides critical support to over 100,000 active duty military families. Ensuring Service members with special needs

family members have access to the appropriate resources is critical to maintaining readiness. In order to do so effectively, the unique and specific needs of that family must be considered when new assignments are being determined. Not only does the Department, along with the individual Services, have the responsibility of ensuring necessary services are available at the new duty station, it must insure such assignments do not have a negative impact on the Service members career path. If confirmed, I will work with the experts in my office, along with the Services and other stakeholders, to include Congress, to conduct a thorough review of the program using all available data, studies and reviews to make the necessary improvements and provide the support and resources our families need. Providing a consistent, accessible, and reliable process for all Service members with special need family members, regardless of their branch of service, is critical and long overdue.

If confirmed, what policies will you implement to assist these families in obtaining these services at their new duty station?

If confirmed, I will make it a priority to work with the Services as well as other stakeholders, to include Congress, to expeditiously conduct a thorough review of policies and procedures and implement needed changes. While I cannot address any new policies at this moment, I can attest to my unshaken commitment to our EFMP participating families.

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?

If confirmed I will work with the experts in my department, the Services, as well as across P&R to develop and execute a comprehensive awareness campaign that not only makes Service members aware of the EFMP services available to them but would serve as a “one stop shop” for guidance and assistance.

Morale, Welfare, and Recreation

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

I believe it is important to support all aspects of quality of life programs for our Service members and their families. If confirmed, I would continue to prioritize quality of life programs that promote the well-being and resilience of Service members and their families. Providing the greatest possible access to MWR programs supports and enhances military family readiness, and ultimately mission readiness.

Commissary and Military Exchange Systems

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

I am aware that the retail business environment has seen evolutionary changes over the last decade. It is my understanding that online ordering and delivery, especially since the pandemic, have been a paradigm shift for the commissary and exchange systems. If confirmed, I will ensure the commissaries and exchanges have the tools and resources to deliver the benefit most efficiently to our Service members and their families.

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

I believe that concentrating future efforts on a structured collaboration and cooperative efforts is the optimal way to gain additional savings, synergies, and efficiencies. If confirmed, I will work to improve the benefit and provide savings, as a tool to improve recruiting and retention of course, and also to deliver nutritious options to Service members and families. I believe every dollar invested in the commissaries has a direct benefit to the overall readiness of the Force.

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

It is my understanding that the commissaries, in-line with the Secretary of Defense's Taking Care of Military and Family Members memo, will maintain at least a 25 percent savings on grocery purchases. If confirmed, I will evaluate the savings and efficiencies created as a result of the memo and will work to sustain the required savings. Sometimes the question is asked: "is the commissary a business, or a benefit?" And the answer seems clear – it is a benefit that is best served when operated as an efficient business. We owe our Military families all the support we can give them while they serve our country; and we owe it to the tax payers to ensure our commissaries are run as efficiently as possible.

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?

Although I do not know all of the details, I am aware that the Department has looked at this before – numerous times – and determined each time that merging the resale organizations does not provide an economic benefit and is not feasible. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the studies already done in this area and will consider any new information that merits another look.

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 do not have sufficient details at this time to adequately comment on the civilian workforce's morale, or the Department's ability to successfully recruit and retain top talent. If confirmed, this will be one of my top priorities to ensure the civilian workforce is supported to achieve the Department's mission. I believe this should be a coordinated effort with other DoD leaders, and I will work closely with them to address workforce needs, as appropriate.

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

I do not have enough information at this time to thoroughly comment on the challenges facing the DoD in managing its civilian workforce; however, considering the Department's complex and technical mission, I expect that the competition for highly skilled talent and maintaining up-to-date skill sets for the existing workforce are major challenges. If confirmed, I will work closely with stakeholders across the Department to assess civilian workforce needs, and develop the plans and strategies necessary to ensure DoD is effectively and efficiently managing this critical workforce segment.

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?

It is my understanding that the Department's Total Force policies are aimed at providing local commanders and managers a maximum amount of flexibility within the law. Additionally, these policies are aimed at ensuring military personnel execute military essential functions in order to maximize the operational capability of the Department.

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?

It is my understanding that if the moratorium were lifted, the Department could find value in exploring areas where there has been significant commercial change and development since 2009. However, it is my understanding that the Department is not currently postured to take advantage of the lifting of the moratorium.

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 have not been involved with the Department's implementation of the probationary period provision. If confirmed, I will review probationary policies to assess their effectiveness toward meeting DoD civilian workforce objectives.

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?

I believe the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower & Reserve Affairs should play a major role in the deliberate development of the appropriate “return to work” and “telework” policies for the Department, with input from other DoD leaders and employees, as appropriate. I believe such efforts must consider lessons learned from the pandemic as well as workplace options necessary to balance support for employees while achieving mission results.

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

As for many organizations, I believe the “return to work” effort will be to ensure the Department can be an employer of choice while continuing to achieve its mission with excellence. If confirmed, I will conduct the necessary assessment to address this and other challenges, and develop strategies to address each one.

Cyber Workforce

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

It is my understanding that the Department is committed to improving Total Force Management to ensure that compelling non-military needs are met with the most cost-effective mix of civilian employees and contract services. I believe that there is no “one size fits all” workforce. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the Department's approach to defining the “right” workforce mix (to include the cyber community) depends on the Department's current missions and goals. Effective Total Force Management should give the Military Services (and their subordinate organizations) the flexibility to determine how best to meet the missions that are being asked of them.

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 to comment on the effectiveness of the Cyber Excepted Service. I understand that the DoD Chief Information Officer (CIO) has responsibility for overseeing its implementation, and if confirmed, I will work with that official to

ensure the Department is meeting requirements for a highly qualified and competent cyber workforce.

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

If confirmed, I will work with officials in the office of the DoD CIO to mitigate any cyber workforce capacity and capability gaps. I believe this would involve assessing the skills of the existing workforce, identifying future positions and skills requirements, and developing strategies to address capability gaps, if any.

Technical Workforce (Ron)

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?

Wide-ranging qualifications and expertise among active-duty military personnel is an asset to the capability of the fighting force. Such diversity of skills adds to the Department's overall strength and ability to be flexible in an ever changing world. However, maintaining the lethality and readiness of the Department's fighting forces must remain the highest priority.

If confirmed, how would you ensure that the directors of DOD science and technology reinvention labs (STRs) have the civilian workforce management tools they need to shape their science, technology, and engineering workforces?

I recognize that there are unique needs in supporting a highly qualified workforce with these desired talents. We must be flexible to accommodate these needs. If confirmed, I will work with the experts in my office along with the Military Departments and other stakeholders, to include Congress, to ensure adequate resources are available and the necessary policy infrastructure is maintained to recruit, develop and retain this important workforce.

Senior Executive Service (Ron)

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?

If confirmed, ensuring the selection of Senior Executive Service candidates who demonstrate the ability to comprehend and manage complex issues and organizations will be critical. Of equal importance is one's ability to lead with empathy, respect and the

willingness to invest in growing the skills and abilities of all team members to ensure the Department is committed to growing and nurturing the next generation of leadership.

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 ensure that members of the SES under my authority have clearly defined and measurable organizational, management and performance standards for themselves and their workforce.

Acquisition Workforce (Ron)

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

If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues supporting the acquisition workforce to facilitate maximum use of AcqDemo personnel flexibilities.

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

In order to better train military personnel, to include acquisition professionals, the military must continue to innovate and grow training curriculum and technology training platforms to ensure DoD has the most lethal and ready force.

In your view, what role should the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower & Reserve Affairs play in developing, executing, and overseeing such training?

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower & Reserve Affairs ensures civilian personnel and military personnel policy aligns with providing the highest level of administrative support.

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

Acquisition workforce management policies can be tested and reviewed to look for additional ways to make leaders accountable for cost overruns on procurement contracts.

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

Commanders at all levels should consider unit readiness, complexity of task and continuity of work when determining which tasks are best accomplished by civilian employees, military personnel, or support contractors.

Does the DOD have a metric for workload per acquisition employee in order to baseline the current needs, as well as to determine the adequacy of the size of the workforce (in comparison to projected workforce needs for future years)? If so, how does that compare to the current size of the acquisition workforce?

I believe the DoD puts measures in place to get metrics for workload. Each position duty description has qualification standards that can be rated against for performance. In addition, manpower provides studies to determine the required size of the workforce based on current and future mission sets. If confirmed, I can work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to determine the current size of the workforce and ensure that the acquisition workforce is sized appropriately to be able to sustain its current and future missions.

STEM Educational Opportunities for Military Dependents (Ron) SBS

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

Many of the men and women of our Armed Forces are highly trained in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Some participate in the Office of the ASD(M&RA) program, called STARBASE, which supports STEM educational opportunities for civilian youth. This program may be a model for a new program which specifically supports military children.

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 DoD STARBASE program, run out of the office of the ASD(M&RA), is a program where civilian children interact with military personnel to explore and observe STEM applications as they relate to our every day world. If confirmed, I will work with the experts in my office to explore how this program may be expanded to increase STEM educational opportunities for military children.

Laboratory, Science and Technology, and Test Range STEM Personnel (Ron)

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?

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower & Reserve Affairs can ensure civilian personnel and military personnel policy aligns with providing the highest level of administrative support to ensure the maximum use of personnel flexibilities to improve the quality of the DoD's STEM workforce.

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

Centralized control and decentralized execution is a core tenant of the military's ability to operate in any environment. I will ensure that where feasible, flexibilities are employed at the lowest appropriate level through empowering my team and delegating.

STEM Educational Opportunities for Military Dependents

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

To the greatest extent possible Military Departments should be supporting STARBASE, which introduces fifth grade students from low-income families to STEM.

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?

If confirmed, I would work with the Reserve Integration team to lead more efforts similar to STARBASE, as well as programs to support internships with industry partners, to ensure we are continuing to increase STEM educational opportunities.

Congressional Oversight (Ron) DJG

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.