

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
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SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**STATEMENT OF  
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BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL  
OF THE  
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
ON  
MILITARY PERSONNEL  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand and distinguished Members of this subcommittee, I am honored to appear before you today on behalf of the dedicated enlisted men and women of the United States Navy serving around the world in defense of our national security interests, American values and families from all walks of life. Congress is an integral part of our Navy team. Catalysts of our success through your unwavering support, you empower us to defend our Nation and our national security interests.

As outlined in the 2018 National Defense Strategy, our efforts are centered on preparing for the war at sea. The increasingly complex security environment is defined by challenges in the maritime domain. The Navy the Nation Needs demands much in this era of great power competition; we must become stronger, faster and effectively build teams who will compete and win any high-end warfight.

It is crucial we make the shift from bureaucratic roadblocks to innovation highways. Harvesting modern ideas means reimagining traditional workflows to maximize efficiency, leveraging ideas that will give us a competitive edge, and developing a more agile workforce empowered to achieve excellence in everything we do and prevailing in the maritime battlespace when necessary. We must minimize distractions, keeping Sailors laser-focused on maintaining our superiority and deterring emerging global threats.

While we have the most capable ships and leading-edge technology, our people have been, and will always be, our greatest advantage against determined adversaries. We must continue to strengthen their technical competence and foster the innovative thinking in our enlisted workforce.

## **RECRUIT**

We strive to recruit the best qualified young Americans, who are interested in pursuing meaningful and altruistic service that benefits our Navy and our Nation. As President John F. Kennedy once said “I can imagine no more rewarding a career and any man who may be asked in this century what he did to make his life worthwhile, I think can respond with a good deal of pride and satisfaction: 'I served in the United States Navy’.”

For those who desire to be a part of this longstanding and exceptional tradition, they will find a career characterized by creativity and the strength that comes from working as part of a unified team, dedicated to preserving our freedom.

There are many brave men and women in our communities across America who answer that noble calling even after 17 years of war. In FY18, we were successful in achieving 100 percent of Active Component (AC) accession goal, which we have met for 137 consecutive months; however, we fell short in our Reserve Component (RC) accessions. Our Record AC retention this year increased the challenge of recruiting prior service Sailors, as there were fewer eligible personnel separating from active duty available to affiliate as reservists.

We must continue to recruit talented Americans who are ready to work hard in a demanding field, solve problems, overcome challenges and be empowered to make our Navy a stronger combat ready force. Accordingly, Navy has been working to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our recruiting organization through realignment, transformation, workforce improvements and policy reform. We are streamlining processes and have established the most efficient Marketing and Advertising campaign in Navy's history under our new brand "Forged by the Sea." Digital Prospecting allows recruiters to leverage messaging tools on the Navy.com website and other social media, increasing the number of recruiting prospects, and reaching diverse markets, while lowering costs-per-lead.

## **TRAIN**

To properly and effectively train the finest Sailors in the world, it is of grave importance that our training facilities are the finest in the world.

Additionally, success is directly reliant on providing the precise training at the right and appropriate time, strategically and intermittently throughout a Sailor's career. Many skills and knowledge bases atrophy over time when they're not properly maintained through rigorous training and continuous use. Through our Sailor 2025 initiative, Ready Relevant Learning (RRL), we are developing a career-long learning continuum to provide the right training at the right time, delivered via modern methods, to enable faster learning and better knowledge retention at multiple points throughout a career. This will help transform our industrial-age, assembly line training model into a modern one that ensures our content takes into account evolving technologies.

In addition to focusing on technical training, it is imperative that we continue to hone in on building competence and character through the Enlisted Leader Development Framework. We must forge leaders of strong character, earlier and faster, to build winning teams that will prevail over our adversaries in any environment. Navy is demonstrating a deliberate commitment to grow our Sailors personally and professionally throughout their careers. For our Enlisted Sailors, we have designed a series of formal courses throughout the career continuum. The courses are short duration, high impact adult learning experiences which focus on Character, Ethics, Leadership, the Profession of Arms, Self-Awareness, and Decision Making. Every Sailor

must be prepared to fight and win. The training, encouragement, empowerment and confidence instilled in them beginning with early days in boot camp will ensure their success. Our E-3s should be smarter, stronger and more capable than the O-3s of our adversaries.

Investing in training infrastructures, RRL, and cultivating stronger naval leaders will ensure that Navy maintains an enduring competitive advantage over any adversary. Serving in our Navy comes with risk and is inherently dangerous. We must do everything within our resources and constraints to properly arm and train our Sailors, so they are well-equipped mentally, physically and emotionally.

A 2017 comprehensive review of basic military training determined that firefighting and damage control training is inadequate. The review recommended that boot camp, a centralized location through which all enlisted Sailors must pass, provide Navy Level I Basic Damage Control and Firefighting Certifications. Every Sailor must be versed in damage control and firefighting. Each Sailor must know how to save their ship, their shipmates and themselves in times of peril. Before reporting to their first ship, every Sailor must have experienced rushing water entering a compartment in order to have some concept of what that is like, as well as know what they are going to do about it. This fundamental requirement demands that we upgrade existing facilities. Consolidating training for these skills at boot camp will provide a solid return on investment, in saved lives alone, to justify the expense. Conversely, failing to make this investment in training, will inevitably cost lives. We cannot, in good conscience, allow the dedicated men and women who selflessly volunteer to serve our Nation to go to sea without first preparing them with the very best training available. Funding these facilities is an investment that will not only save lives, but will be the difference between winning or losing in major combat operations at sea. The only thing more expensive than fighting a war is losing a war.

## **RETAIN**

The Navy the Nation needs is on a path to grow to 355 ships, but recruiting alone won't be enough to sustain our ranks and safeguard our Navy as a superior combat-credible maritime force. We are at a strategic crossroad in which we need to think about how we conduct business to retain the best and brightest while inspiring all Sailors to seek their maximum potential.

While the Navy succeeded in increasing retention across all pay grades in FY18, in fact the highest rates seen over the last decade, we will experience some challenges ahead, particularly in the Nuclear Field, Special Warfare, Advanced Electronics, Aviation Maintenance and Information Technology communities. This has required focused retention efforts, to include targeted re-enlistment bonuses, to keep their talent and unique skills on our team.

When evaluating retention, it is imperative to assess the reasons why Sailors choose to stay or leave the Navy. The data we've collected, primarily from E-1 to E-6 Sailors with less than 15 years of service, indicates that work-life balance, leadership, command climate, impact on family, and civilian job opportunities were the top five influencers to leave the Navy. The top influencers to stay in the Navy included medical/dental benefits, monetary compensation and retirement, housing and promotion opportunities, and other benefits such as leave, education and the commissary.

One of the best programs we currently have to increase retention is the Meritorious Advancement Program (MAP), which empowers our top performer with a deserved promotion to the next pay grade. This program identifies talent and ensures we are incentivizing our most capable Sailors to continue to serve on the Navy team — keeping their expertise and experience in our ranks. This program empowers commanding officers to recognize, promote and ultimately retain their best Sailors, once they are ready to assume greater levels of leadership and responsibility.

## **FUTURE OF THE FORCE (SAILOR 2025)**

Attracting and retaining the best Sailors in an increasingly competitive talent market requires continued flexibility and transparency in policies and practices. Sailor 2025 is the Navy's program to improve and modernize personnel management, training policies and systems to more effectively identify, recruit and train talented people to better manage the force while improving warfighting readiness.

The modern information technology (IT) infrastructure we are building will improve how we recruit, train, and retain talent as well as assign talent and provide competitive compensation packages. This system will provide the kind of flexibility and permeability our Sailors expect and deserve.

We have already implemented a number of important initiatives, to include enhancing our parental leave program, changing our dual military colocation policy, expanding the Career Intermission Pilot Program, strengthening advocacy and health and fitness programs across the force, as well as expanding the hours and capacity of Child Development Centers.

These initiatives effectively allow us to recruit, develop, manage, reward and retain talent in our force. Many administrative systems and programs were outdated, overly bureaucratic, and riddled with administrative distractions that took time away from warfighters — keeping them tied up with overly complicated processes instead of focused on training and getting the job done in order to allow them to better manage work-life balance.

Today's Sailors are technically savvy, eager to see our systems evolve on pace with industry standards. The expectation is that they should be able to handle their personal administration in the same secure manner in which they currently conduct banking from a mobile phone. Their time is too valuable to be spent in line waiting to conduct transactions that can be routinely accomplished from their smartphones. Just as our platforms and weapon systems have evolved, so must our personnel systems by using cutting edge technologies and new policies and procedures outlined in our Sailor 2025 initiatives. This as an investment in our future, our Sailors, and the manner in which we push them to strive for innovation.

Most importantly, these efforts return time and opportunity to the deck plates, allowing leaders to focus on tactical skills and warfighting readiness. Under Sailor 2025, we are empowering our Sailors.

## **FAMILIES**

As the Chief of Naval Operations says, "a stronger family equals a stronger fleet." Fleet and Family Readiness programs enable a ready and lethal Navy force, as it builds Sailor and family member resilience. Recent studies show that family member's quality of life and services provided to sustain them are directly linked with service member retention. We are in the second year of executing the Chief of Naval Operations' Navy Family Framework, which reinforces the importance of the role Navy families play in mission success. In 2018, we conducted spouse engagement sessions worldwide, and in 2019 we will roll out a new consolidated source of official information — a mobile app — on support services, resources, and training currently available to Navy families, which gives them tools to successfully navigate the challenges associated with the military lifestyle.

In recent engagements with Sailors one common theme that arises is accessibility of available, affordable and quality child care. Lack of available and affordable child care is a national issue for our generation; for our Navy, it is a critical Readiness issue. Our Navy team must remain vigilant and strong to effectively preserve America's strategic influence and interests around the World. Sailors must be prepared to "fight tonight," constantly ready when we least expect it. We must drill harder and more frequently —for it is sets and reps that will build the muscle memory that ensures overwhelming victory in combat. Our Navy simply cannot afford to lose valuable training hours because of worry and uncertainty over whether their children are in a secure, safe and comfortable setting. We also can't afford to lose talented Sailors who decide, as some have already done, that the Navy is incompatible with having a family. Sailors provide security for all Americans by protecting the homeland 24/7, and in return, we owe it to them to ensure their own families are taken care of allowing them to focus on the mission at hand.

Over the past decade, Navy has added 7,000 child care spaces, opened five new 24/7 Child Development Centers in Norfolk, San Diego, and Hawaii; and, where there is a need, extended operating hours from 12 to 14 hours per day; however, Sailor demand for child care exceeds Navy's current 44,000 childcare spaces. Today, there are over 8,000 children waiting for DoD-provided child care, and the Navy accounts for 54% of the overall DoD shortfall. Approximately 2,000 children have been on a waiting list for over six months, some waiting well over a year. Waiting lists are predominately in our high-cost waterfront cities and fleet concentration areas in California, Virginia, Hawaii, Washington and the National Capital Region.

The challenges facing our Sailors needing affordable and quality child care mirror challenges facing other American families. In 19 states where the majority of our Navy demand resides, there is a cumulative shortfall of 1.4 million child care spaces, according to Child Care Aware of America. Across the United States, the most common child care arrangement for working parents is through a family member. However, that is not an option for most Sailors, who do not reside near extended family and, therefore, unable to rely on family members to help with child care.

For Sailors able to find child care in the community, affordability is a significant challenge, with care costing upwards of 25 percent of total family income. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under the current standard for child care affordability, families should be paying less than seven percent of household income to cover the costs of child care.

We are tirelessly working through various options to address the child care needs of Sailors and their families, so they can focus on mission accomplishment. Navy will continue actively seeking public/private partnerships in Fleet concentration areas to increase accessibility of affordable child care that will benefit both Sailors and the local community. We look forward to reporting our progress and appreciate your continuing support and partnership with this critical personnel issue.

Relocating to where our Navy and our Nation needs us is an inherent part of service in the U.S. Navy. While a permanent change of station can be difficult, it can also be full of new opportunities for growth for our families, as it pushes us to move past our comfort zones and embrace new cultures and communities. Nevertheless, it doesn't diminish the stress brought on by the major life changes and logistical challenges associated with the move. In 2018, the Navy tested a pilot in which Sailors were afforded the opportunity to take charge of their move as part of an effort to empower them, reduce bureaucratic burdens, and give them the flexibility to execute the move in the manner that works best for their respective families. Instead of relying on a one-size fits all contract move, the test group of 120 Sailors was given the opportunity to use government travel credit cards, which they previously were not allowed. This approach greatly benefitted these Sailors, because it alleviated the tremendous burden of having to pay

thousands of dollars in moving expenses out-of-pocket until reimbursement claims could be settled. Navy is the only branch not currently providing this option to our families. We know we are behind the curve in this facet of family readiness and support and we are working to implement a pragmatic and resourceful approach to this issue that affects the quality of life and readiness of Navy families.

Additionally, we are developing plans for implementing reimbursement of spouse licensure fees Congress enacted in the FY18 NDAA. Our Navy spouses should not have to put their own careers on the backburner and we look forward to enhancing the ease with which they may continue working in the new communities into which they relocate incident to a Permanent Change of Station move. We ask for your support in incentivizing licensure and reciprocity across state lines for our military spouses. With your help, we can provide more opportunities for them to work in the communities their families are stationed in. Many have valuable knowledge and experience in educational, medical, and childcare fields. As it stands now, there are 39 states that support the transfer of teaching credentials. We would greatly appreciate and benefit from any assistance you can provide in encouraging your States to support these initiatives. Otherwise, we risk losing valuable expertise if Sailors leave our team, as many have cited on exit surveys, to find better opportunities elsewhere for their families.

## **CONCLUSION**

As we continue evolving in this era of great power competition, we recognize that we once again may experience major maritime battles comparable to those of World War II. Adversaries are committing resources in the latest technologies, platforms and weapon systems in the maritime domain, threatening our National Security interests around the globe in an unprecedented manner.

Through sustained commitment and continued investment in removing distractions and improving training and quality of life, we will ensure our greatest advantage against any adversary — our Sailors — are ready for any fight. The best ships, aircraft, and technology are of limited value without the best trained and most capable men and women to operate them. Investing in personnel and the systems that sustain them will not only drive innovation and excellence, while ensuring our ability to recruit and retain America's top talent to serve in our Navy.

We appreciate the continuing efforts of Congress to ensure we have all that we need to fight and win. We have and will continue to improve the fleet readiness and retain our Sailors and their families, while remaining responsible stewards of taxpayer resources. Thank you for your steadfast support for the men and women of the United States Navy.