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SENATE ARMED SERVICES  
COMMITTEE**

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**UNITED STATES NAVY**

**BEFORE THE**

**SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL**

**U.S. SENATE**

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## *Introduction*

Good afternoon Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren and distinguished Members of this Subcommittee. On behalf of all of the men and women of your United States Navy, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

Our Navy builds great people, great leaders, and great teams to innovate, solve hard problems, and dominate in combat. Our Sailors stand ready as a lethal fighting force to deter or confront any adversary. We will always evaluate and enhance our capability to attract, develop, and manage a talented workforce. Ultimately, the Navy's success in combat is dependent on the strength of our Navy team.

Navy thanks the bipartisan support from Congress, and the work of this subcommittee in particular, for passing P.L. 118-159, the Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 (FY 2025 NDAA). The FY 2025 NDAA grants us several authorities to use to increase readiness and sustain our Culture of Excellence. Another example is the enhanced capabilities given to Navy to manage our Service Members such as allowing officers to opt-out of selection board considerations to complete certain assignments, advanced education, or career progression requirements delayed by an assignment or education goal. Navy must maintain a strong foundation of our most critical strength, our highly trained and skilled personnel in order to enhance lethality and readiness.

When I first testified to this subcommittee, I assured you that we would continue to evaluate and improve our capabilities to achieve our mission of attracting, developing and managing the talent to ensure our advantage at sea while providing exceptional service to military and veteran families, caregivers and survivors. As I look back on my journey in charge of our Navy's greatest asset, I am proud of what our team has accomplished and encouraged for the future of our fighting force.

## *Our Sailors*

Thanks to the incredible performance of our recruiting nation, who utilized all statutory authorities, levers and data available, we not only met but exceeded our mission in FY 2024, contracting 40,978 future Sailors, the highest number since 2003. We continue to drive towards increased accession missions to meet the requirements of the Fleet; our FY 2025 mission is 40,600, which we are on glideslope to meet and exceed this year. Our recruiting initiatives, coupled with enhanced retention levers, will promote improvements in our manning goal of 100% enlisted rating fill by the end of 2026, which will directly translate to reducing our 20,000 operational gaps at sea. We expect to start seeing that progress on the waterfront later this Spring.

The FY 2025 budgeted end strength reflects the continuing recovery to meet Fleet requirements and is achievable given the current recruiting environment and shipping capacity. Projected execution and requirements of the Fleet are greater than what is currently budgeted as Navy will maintain recruiting goals necessary to further reduce the gap to Fleet requirements.

## ***Recruitment***

Building on the success of our recruiting efforts in FY 2024, the Navy implemented a comprehensive strategy to further enhance recruitment for both enlisted Sailors and officers. We achieved this improvement by implementing data informed processes throughout the recruiting enterprise. Navy established a Recruiting Operations Center to monitor data in real time, implemented the Future Sailor Preparatory Course to improve accession success, streamlined medical waiver reviews, increased the quality and number of recruiters, adjusted recruiting goal incentives, improved marketing processes, and identified and removed barriers to recruiter productivity. These changes are sustainable. As a result, Navy is on pace to exceed our FY 2025 recruiting goal of 40,600.

We continue to explore innovative strategies to attract qualified, motivated individuals. Navy is maximizing its pool of recruits with the physical and academic Future Sailor Preparatory Courses, as well as by expanding our reach through partnerships and traditional and mixed media marketing. We are maintaining our standards as every recruit must complete the same training at boot camp and meet all qualifications for his or her assigned rating.

Navy Recruiting Command (NRC) achieved 99% of the Active Component Officer mission in FY 2024, falling slightly short in Nuclear Propulsion Officer Candidate (NUPOC) and Medical. NRC is now using data-driven production reviews to ensure accountability and adherence to recruiting directives. These data-driven decisions are a direct result of NRC's enhanced use of our enterprise-wide Customer Relationship Management (eCRM) system to improve candidate tracking, offering a more intuitive interface and user-friendly dashboards. Finally, our strengthened partnerships with Chaplain, Medical, and Nuclear community leaders enabled a more targeted outreach and specialized recruitment strategies to build a strong talent pipeline.

## ***Talent Management***

Continued investment in Force Development (FD) is critical to ensuring our Sailors receive the advanced, comprehensive, and effective training and education they need—whether on the job, during deployment, or in their off-duty hours. The Navy is committed to expanding and modernizing education, professional development, and training to enhance Sailor performance and Fleet readiness. Our programs provide a continuous learning path that develops the skills and knowledge Sailors need to succeed throughout their careers. To build and retain combat-ready Warfighters, the Navy offers rewarding career paths, advancement opportunities, and leadership development, supported by a strong performance management system. Furthermore, we are modernizing our talent marketplace, shifting from a vacancy-driven advancement system to a billet-based approach, which offers Sailors more choice in their assignments while better aligning with the Navy's operational needs and enhancing mission outcomes across the force.

We continue to develop a more robust enlisted talent marketplace focused on flexible, streamlined, and responsive community and career management. MyNavy HR is adopting a talent management approach that better values strengths, skill portfolios (to include proficiency and experience), and career development aligned with the Navy's operational needs. This is being achieved through the Detailing Marketplace Campaign Plan (DMCP), with continued

emphasis on Billet-based Advancement (BBA). BBA aims to align the Navy's advancement and distribution systems, ensuring commands have stable personnel assignments and Sailors have the experience and obligated service to complete their tours. This merit based process matches Sailors with Navy job requirements and skillsets, advancing them to the new paygrade once they accept, obligate, and report to the new command, while supporting informed career decisions and meeting critical manning needs.

Our officer talent management efforts continue to benefit from the authorities provided by Congress in the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act, to include promotion merit reorder, expanded continuation authority and expanded officer spot promotion authority. To enhance leader development, we utilize the Navy Leadership Assessment Program (NLAP), which is a data-driven initiative process that provides valuable insights into the strengths, vulnerabilities, the potential of officers, and complements existing command qualification processes. The program, developed in collaboration with the Office of Naval Research, uses a standardized leadership competency model and includes technical solutions to automate and visualize data for screening boards. As NLAP moves forward, it will expand to include more Type Commanders, integrating lessons learned and tailoring the program to meet specific community needs while maintaining rigorous scientific standards.

### *Retention*

Navy is dedicated to retaining our most capable Sailors; retention is a critical component of achieving our end-strength goals. To that end, we leverage monetary and non-monetary incentives, including Selective Reenlistment Bonuses, suspension of High Year Tenure Length of Service gates, the Retention Excellence Award and Best in Class program, and enhanced exit and milestone surveys which focus our retention efforts. As a result, enlisted retention remains healthy. We exceeded our FY 2024 retention benchmark forecasts in zone A (0-6 years), zone B (6-10 years), and zone C (10-14 years). Navy continues to meet or exceed its retention benchmark forecast for FY 2025.

These efforts are improving manning in critical billets at sea and ashore, ensuring we have the right people in the right places to maintain our operational readiness. We regularly review compensation packages to ensure we remain competitive in a tight labor market, positioning the Navy as an employer of choice. The latest Department of Defense Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation highlights that our compensation package is strongly competitive with the civilian employers.

While officer retention remains a challenge in specific career fields, we appreciate the continued support of Congress in supporting our budget to preserve monetary retention incentives in areas such as Aviation, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Surface Warfare, Submarine Warfare, Naval Special Warfare, and Health Professions Officers.

Ship manning is an essential element of operational readiness, but it also impacts job satisfaction and retention. Since 2015, Navy has increased the number of authorized billets on at-sea units, but at-sea manning has not kept pace with that growth. At the beginning of FY 2025, Navy had a shortfall of Sailors relative to at-sea billets. Our recruiting and retention efforts will drive

progress towards our primary manning goal of 100% enlisted rating fill by the end of 2026. Gaps at sea have fallen from 15% to 13%, although this metric trails recruiting successes by the length of time it takes for new accessions to complete training and report to the Fleet.

The Navy continues strong emphasis on quality of life improvements, such as expanded family support programs, improved housing, and more robust mental health resources, as we know that this affects Sailors' retention decisions. Additionally, Navy Personnel Command recently spearheaded targeted efforts to discuss and influence Sailor intentions ahead of stay/go decision points, leaning in on how we might accommodate career options to retain them. These combined efforts help to build a more resilient, experienced, and sustainable force for the future.

### *Quality of Service*

The Navy recognizes and values the service and sacrifice of our Sailors around the world. As such, it is our duty to take care of our Sailors and families by delivering the highest standards of Quality of Service (QoS) they deserve. MyNavy HR continues to be an active member of the VCNO-established QoS Cross-functional Team to identify and address issues that result in an inadequate experience for our Sailors.

MyNavyHR remains focused on providing Sailors with a meaningful sea-going experience during their initial tour. We identified off-ship career growth opportunities for Sailors stationed on aircraft carriers undergoing Refueling and Complex Overhaul (RCOH). We conducted Fleet Manpower Requirements Determination (FMRD) studies to ensure the right manpower mix for mission readiness. Moving forward, we will hold proactive manning summits to reduce Sailor tour lengths on operational assets in industrial environments. In addition, we also issued a policy establishing tour length guidelines for first-term Sailors in RCOH or extended shipyard periods, addressing manning levels, special handling for communities like nuclear-trained Sailors, and Sailors volunteering to stay.

Taking care of our Sailors is a top priority, and that includes offering those in non-deployable status meaningful and challenging assignments that align with their skills and career goals. To help keep talented Sailors during times when they cannot deploy, the Navy launched the EMPLOY program. EMPLOY is a new process that happens before a Sailor—whether officer or enlisted—gets formally considered by a Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) for entry into the Disability Evaluation System (DES). The EMPLOY Board decides if a non-deployable Sailor can continue serving in important, mission-focused roles onshore, either in the U.S. or overseas, instead of entering the DES process. Through this program, detailers and Community Managers work with Sailors to explore career path changes, like switching to more shore-based specialties. This initiative helps the Navy retain Sailors with valuable skills, knowledge, and experience that are essential to our warfighting mission.

### *MyNavy HR Service Delivery and IT Drivers*

The Navy is focused on improving performance, integrating Active and Reserve Components, increasing productivity, ensuring auditability, and driving cost efficiencies in personnel readiness. This transformation leverages data-driven decision-making to optimize talent distribution and enhance HR services for over 400,000 Sailors and their families. In FY 2024, the Navy achieved historic lows in transaction times, resolving military pay cases in three days, travel claims in two days, and activity gains and losses in two days. We also ensured DD-214s were delivered 60 days before separation when submitted on time. Additionally, the implementation of eCRM streamlined processes, improved Sailor service, and reduced burdens on both Sailors and the workforce. Significant progress was also made in auditability and financial management, with positive results from the independent Public Auditor.

By integrating advanced technologies and data-driven solutions, the transformation seeks to streamline personnel management processes such as pay, benefits, career management, and training. This initiative replaces outdated systems with more agile, secure, and user-friendly platforms, empowering Sailors to manage their careers more effectively while enabling leaders to make better-informed decisions. Ultimately, IT transformation will enhance overall mission readiness by optimizing HR operations through innovation and technology.

### *Advancing Our Culture of Excellence*

Our Sailors and their families deserve to serve in an environment of trust, respect, and connectedness. The Navy's drive at sustaining a Culture of Excellence (COE) prioritizes command culture alongside combat readiness. Our COE prepares Sailors to operate in uncertain, complex, and rapidly changing environments by ensuring every member of the Navy team – Sailors and Civilians – has the opportunity to become the best version of themselves as they work to preserve the peace, respond in crisis, and win decisively in combat. We are keeping Sailors aware of best practices learned from the Fleet, among other insights aimed to enhance Sailors' everyday lives. Specifically, we are (1) setting clear standards and measures, (2) providing education and training, starting with commands, then scaling up/down the career continuum, (3) practicing standards and measures through development forums, for the individual and unit, (4) incentivizing through talent management, and (5) awarding at the unit and individual levels.

The Navy is unwavering in its commitment to taking care of its Sailors, recognizing that primary prevention is our best defense against suicide and sexual assault. The Navy Suicide Prevention Program prioritizes Sailors' well-being by offering critical resources, stress management tools, and guidance to help recognize and address suicide risks early. Through initiatives like Embedded Mental Health programs, the Sailor Assistance and Intercept for Life (SAIL) program, and the Suicide-Related Behavior Response and Postvention Guide, the Navy fosters a culture of support and connection, empowering leaders to promote mental health and resilience within their units. Similarly, the Navy's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) program is grounded in the belief that any occurrence of sexual assault is unacceptable, emphasizing prevention, education, and training while ensuring 24/7 worldwide reporting and comprehensive victim care. The Navy remains committed to accountability and building a culture where Sailors feel supported, safe, and valued, ensuring that every Sailor has the resources they need to thrive.

### *Conclusion*

We will continue to recruit and retain talented, dedicated Americans to ensure Navy will remain the strongest, lethal fighting force. We will also deliver the quality of service that our Sailors and families deserve. I greatly appreciate the partnership with this Subcommittee and other Members of Congress to maintain our strong warfighting teams over my past three years, and I am especially grateful for the work of the professional staff members, who enabled open and transparent communications. It is my greatest hope that we can continue our collaborative relationship as I transition with my relief, when confirmed. It has been the honor of a lifetime to serve as the Chief of Naval Personnel and more importantly as a uniformed member of the Naval Service. On behalf of the United States Navy and their families, I thank you for your sustained commitment and unwavering support as we look toward the Navy of the future.