

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Anthony Tata
Nominee to be Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Duties and Qualifications

- 1. Please describe your background, experience, and expertise that qualify you for the position of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) (USD(P&R)).**

I believe my 28-year military career combined with my leadership in education, state government, and business uniquely qualifies me to lead the team in the Undersecretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) (USD(P&R)) at a time of heightened international tensions. I have led Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines in combat and in peacetime. Caring for them and their families was my highest priority. As a commander of a combat brigade in the 101st Airborne Division, I commanded four battalions of aviation assets, sharpening my focus on safety and readiness on some of the most difficult airframes to maintain. When I was a battalion commander in the 82nd Airborne Division, we were often the Division Ready Force 1 and required to be moving at notification plus two-hour recall. Readiness was the standard.

As an educator I understand the complexities of teaching and learning to achieve growth and proficiency for students. As a former Secretary of Transportation in North Carolina, I know that teamwork between the executive and legislative branches is paramount to accomplishing anything. As a businessman, I know the high demand for our Service members transitioning from military duty to the private sector. Steadfast in my loyalty to our active, guard and reserve uniformed personnel, as well as their DoD civilian teammates and the contract workforce, I can make meaningful contributions to the force, their families, and ultimately to the readiness of our nation to fight and win wars.

- 2. If confirmed, how would you adhere to and further the fundamental principle of civilian control of the armed forces?**

If confirmed, I intend to lead OUSD(P&R) as the civilian leader I have been for the past 16 years by listening, learning and leading while establishing a rhythm that communicates the administration and department priorities. This is a bedrock principle that requires strong leadership to communicate effectively to the uniformed personnel that we are listening to them while also leading them.

Major Challenges and Priorities

- 3. What do you consider to be the most significant challenges you would face if confirmed as the USD(P&R), and how would you address each of those**

challenges?

If confirmed, I believe that I will face challenges in several areas, the first of which, is aligning national security and defense strategy imperatives with personnel policy. For example, if we are funding an expansion of shipbuilding, ammunition, and repair depots, what is the status of our DoD civilian workforces in these areas and how to we scale to meet the demand?

Focusing the Defense Health Agency on twin priorities of increasing combat capable surgeons, medics, and nurses while also providing enhanced services to our uniformed personnel, their families, and veterans. For example, in a recent Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) hearing, one of the witnesses indicated that only 10% of the current surgeon workforce sees enough trauma patients to be considered “combat ready.”

Resourcing the Sexual Assault Response Workforce and Suicide Prevention personnel. Given the recent realignment of personnel, if confirmed, I view the resourcing of these key positions as a priority and will work to ensure the frameworks are staffed.

Blast overpressure and traumatic brain injury baselining and prevention require implementation in the services so that we can better understand the effects of blast trauma. Establishing baselines and periodic reviews will be crucial to implementation of a comprehensive program.

Maintaining momentum in recruiting and retention. If standards are adjusted, we will need to watch closely the impact on specific military occupational skills.

Family readiness, to include childcare centers, spouse employment, DoD Education Activity, and commissaries. A focused warfighter is a more lethal warfighter. All the programs that support a deployed warfighter require assessment and reinforcement. If confirmed, I will rapidly visit and assess all family readiness programs and learn what, if any, improvements are needed, then make recommendations based on that information.

Supporting suicide prevention for all Service members, their families, and the Total Force. Suicide prevention directly supports the readiness and lethality of the military. The Department remains committed to reducing the number of deaths by suicide throughout the armed forces through a comprehensive and public health approach focused on prevention, intervention and postvention. If confirmed, I will continue to support long-term, sustained efforts to prevent suicide throughout the total force.

Military readiness requires ready personnel and mission capable equipment trained in warfighting environments that simulate our most challenging contingency plans. If confirmed, I plan to work closely with the Under Secretaries of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and for Policy to ensure this alignment between

personnel and equipment readiness and training.

Aviation safety is a challenge in a high operations tempo environment with fewer experienced pilots and aging airframes. The December 2020 National Commission on Aviation Safety highlights that aviators and maintainers are saddled with non-aviation duties, unpredictable resourcing, and higher operations tempo, all of which contribute to aviation mishaps that cost lives, aircraft, and money. If confirmed, I will endeavor to understand this problem better and make it a primary focus so that we can better stabilize our critical air crews, maintainers, and airframes.

4. What is your view of the scope and importance of the USD(P&R)'s oversight duties and powers with respect to the armed forces?

I believe there is no greater duty or responsibility than establishing personnel and readiness policies that provide maximum health and welfare for our Service members, their families, and our DoD civilians. Given that our constitution requires civilian control of the military departments, it is the USD(P&R)'s duty to align personnel policies with the national security and defense strategies of the administration so that the Nation has the best people and readiness to protect our vital interests. If confirmed, I will work closely with the services to gain a fuller understanding of their requirements while also ensuring alignment with all Department policies and objectives.

Conflicts of Interest

Federal ethics laws, to include 18 U.S.C. §208, prohibit government employees from participating in matters in which they, or certain family members or organizations with which they have certain relationships, have a financial interest.

5. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to disclose any potential conflicts of interest, including investments, business ties, family relationships, or other connections that could be perceived as influencing your decision making?

I agree to comply with all conflicts of interest disclosure requirements set forth in the Ethics in Government Act and implementing regulations.

6. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, that if a conflict of interest arises, you will recuse yourself from participating in any decisions regarding that specific matter?

I agree to comply with all recusal requirements under 18 U.S.C. § 208 and implementing regulations.

7. **Do you commit, without qualification, if confirmed, to make decisions on the merits, and exclusively in the public interest, without regard to private gain or personal benefit?**

I commit to deciding matters on the merits based on the public interest, without regard to any private gain or personal benefit.

Personnel Policy Implementation

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

If confirmed, I will prioritize the streamlining of processes and leverage existing authorities and programs, both military and civilian, to improve recruitment and retention of critical personnel, including in healthcare, as well as ensuring alignment with the National Security and interim National Defense Strategies.

9. **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, it will be my responsibility to ensure the Department informs and consults with this Committee, and other appropriate congressional committees, regarding the implementation of all statutorily directed personnel policies.

10. **What is your understanding of the time period within which the Department must implement personnel or health policies directed by law?**

I understand the Department's responsibility to implement statutory provisions in accordance with the law. I am also aware of resource limitations and process constraints that can cause delays in implementation from time to time. If confirmed, I will strive to ensure timely implementation and will inform this Committee, and other committees as appropriate, of any delays.

11. **According to the "Fork in the Road" memo from the Office of Personnel Management, "Employees will be subject to enhanced standards of suitability and conduct as we move forward," but no further guidance has been issued on what that means. What is your understanding of the current definition of "suitability" being used by DOD, the process for those suitability determinations, and how that might change?**

While I am familiar with the general concept of suitability relating to security clearances and employment, I would need to be briefed on the specific definition and processes currently used by DoD. If confirmed, I will prioritize gaining a thorough understanding of these procedures and any ongoing efforts to update or modify them.

Readiness of the Armed Forces

12. What is your assessment of how effectively the Department of Defense and the armed forces actually measure and track readiness?

I understand that the Department has taken steps to more effectively track and measure Total Force readiness through a Strategic Readiness Framework and associated assessments and tools, looking at how preparedness is built and maintained across threats and time horizons. This type of analysis is key to understanding readiness tradeoffs and making the readiness decisions required for the Total Force to meet both the known challenges of today and the unknown challenges of tomorrow.

If confirmed, I will delve into existing readiness assessments and tools in OUSD(P&R) and work with the team to advance them in line with the President's direction and the Secretary's guidance, and in support of national security imperatives and our overall mission.

13. How would you assess the overall readiness of the armed forces, specifically their readiness to execute the National Defense Strategy and associated operational plans?

Our armed forces are the strongest and most lethal fighting forces in the world. Under the leadership of President Trump and Secretary Hegseth, the DoD has acted swiftly to maintain Total Force readiness to execute on the recently released Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance, meeting the urgency of the moment and deterring our adversaries over time.

If confirmed, I will work alongside my peers throughout the Department to capture and apply critical readiness information, spanning mobilization to sustainment, to inform key decisions, stay abreast of dynamic readiness requirements, and advance overall preparedness, as well as continue to realign programs and resources toward developing the capabilities and readiness necessary to achieve peace through strength.

14. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to improve personnel readiness, including with regard to the health of the force?

It is no secret that DoD is facing one of the most complex, lethal, and uncertain security environments in decades. Operating in multiple theaters and facing both traditional and non-traditional threats, the decisions that senior leaders make to foster Total Force preparedness in line with mission requirements and strategic priorities are critical. We owe it to our warfighters – and their families – to ensure that these decisions are enabling Service members to safely and successfully meet the mission, no matter the domain, conditions, or adversary.

If confirmed, I will collaborate with my colleagues across the Department, specifically in the Military Departments and Services, to maintain a relentless focus on advancing all aspects of Total Force readiness, to include the provision of leading education and training directly tied to warfighting, execution of the highest possible health and safety standards, and dissemination of the data required to inform and enhance personnel readiness decisions.

15. If confirmed, what changes would you implement to ensure the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness more directly and effectively tracks readiness across the force?

I understand that the Department has taken steps to more effectively track and measure Total Force readiness through a Strategic Readiness Framework and associated assessments and tools, looking at how it builds and maintains preparedness across threats and time horizons. This type of analysis is key to understanding readiness tradeoffs and making the readiness decisions required for the Total force to meet both the known challenges of today and the unknown challenges of tomorrow.

If confirmed, I will delve into existing readiness assessments and tools in OUSD(P&R) and work with the team to advance them in line with the President's direction and the Secretary's guidance, and in support of national security imperatives and our overall mission.

Non-Deployable Service members

16. 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 support the Secretary's priority to rebuild our military capabilities to make sure we have the strongest, most lethal force in the world. We need to make sure our Service members have access to the health care they need to restore our warfighters to health, but we must also recognize that some medical conditions will be a permanent impediment to deployment. In those cases, yes, those Service members should be referred to the disability evaluation system.

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

There are exceptions to policy, and those would need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For instance, there might be a skillset so unique and so hard to recruit that we would indeed need to issue a waiver to retain a non-deployable Service member.

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

Medical readiness in the Reserve Component has been a perennial challenge from what I have read and understand. There might be opportunities for more data sharing to identify specific opportunities for improvement in select military occupational specialties or regions with limited access to health care. If confirmed, closing healthcare gaps among the Reserves will be a policy area that I will investigate.

Collaboration between the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs

19. In your view, how effective has Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Department of Labor collaboration been to date, and what would you do to enhance it?

Because of the training and experience our Service members receive, and leadership capabilities they subsequently develop, every private business would like to hire our great men and women transitioning from military to civilian life. We need to make this transition as smooth and identifiable as possible, meaning that transparency on transition opportunity helps recruitment and retention. The latest Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation identified that joint earners make joint decisions. Making sure the transition opportunities are clear is critical to providing useful decision-making information to our Service members and their families. DoD and VA collaborate and share resources where mutually beneficial to improve efficiency and cost effectiveness of health care, benefits and services, transition, and business operations for Service members and Veterans. I understand that much of the effort happens within the formal Joint Executive Committee (JEC) structure, which is co-chaired by the USD(P&R) and the VA Deputy Secretary. A strategic goal within that structure is to enhance the transition and post-separation experience for Service members, which is done in close coordination with our colleagues at the Department of Labor (DOL).

There are always ways to increase and improve how our departments provide eligible Service members with the benefits, support, preparation, and opportunities to

facilitate transition from military service. If confirmed, I will support our colleagues and the leadership within DoD, VA, and DOL.

20. If confirmed, how would you improve the seamless transition of each service member as they move from service member to veteran status?

I recognize how important and critical it is to support Service members and their families during the transition period. DoD and VA have embraced a new appreciation of overlapping interests and intertwined responsibilities across the Service member and Veteran life cycle.

I understand that the Military-to-Civilian Readiness Framework has become a holistic, living, adjustable framework that puts the Service member at the center of the transition process and officially designated the transition period as the critical 365-days pre-separation to 365-days post-separation. This facilitates standardized and individualized assessments conducted by each military service, addresses known risks during transition, and highlights opportunities for improvement.

If confirmed, I will continue to champion improvements and efforts in close coordination with our interagency partners.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 significantly reformed the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to provide a more individualized and tailored experience for servicemembers. The program is no longer one-size fits all.

21. Since these changes have been implemented, what is your view of the effectiveness of the TAP, and how might it be improved?

I know that today's TAP course is very different and far more effective than the program of 10, 5, or even 3 years ago. The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 instituted a flexible design that ensures tailored support, alternate pathways, and multiple levels of assistance to align resources with individual goals while maintaining Service member engagement.

Congress provided DoD the authorities necessary to ensure TAP remains relevant, adaptable, and continually evolving to meet the diverse needs of transitioning Service members.

If confirmed, I look forward to the continued work with the military departments, and interagency partners on continuous improvements that support our Service members and their families during the transition period.

22. In your view, how can TAP be improved to provide better support to members of the reserve components?

Reaching Service members in the Reserve Components carries unique timing and support considerations when their transition period begins.

The NDAA for FY 2019 transformed TAP from a one-size fits all program. DoD, VA and DOL have a shared focus on providing a comprehensive, timely, and personalized approach to ensure transitioning Service members and Veterans have access to quality care, benefits programs, job training, and post-service placement services at the right time.

If confirmed, I look forward to engaging directly on this matter and will work to support inclusion of transition elements unique to the Reserve Components.

23. If confirmed, what goals would you establish in your role as the co-chair of the Joint Executive Committee?

I know that by statute, the USD (P&R) is the DoD co-chair of the JEC and the VA Deputy Secretary serves as the VA JEC co-chair.

Through the JEC, a statutory framework is provided for oversight of interagency decision-making process that is Service member-and-veteran centric, results-driven, and forward-looking throughout a Service member's career and transition to veteran status.

DoD and VA senior leaders are now more interconnected and aware of how their decisions impact one another. If confirmed, I will support DoD senior leaders and the Personnel & Readiness team to ensure this relationship remains strong and collaborative.

Domestic Violence and Child Abuse within Military Families

24. What is your understanding of the extent of domestic violence and child abuse in the armed forces, and, if confirmed, what actions will you take to address these issues?

Any domestic violence or child abuse is against the law, and having served as a commander at multiple levels, I understand it requires immediate attention.

Accordingly, I take the health and well-being of the force and our military families extremely seriously. Domestic violence and child abuse are serious issues impacting readiness that have no place, but do exist, in our military. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring these issues are receiving the attention they deserve and the necessary resources to support effective prevention and response.

25. In your view, what more can the Department do to *prevent* child abuse and domestic and intimate partner violence?

In my experience, strong unit leadership and family support groups help mitigate these issues somewhat. However, the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) is uniquely positioned in that it includes a dedicated prevention component through services such as the New Parent Support Program (NPSP). I understand that the NPSP is a voluntary, prevention-focused program that offers support and education to parents and families. It helps to strengthen parenting skills, reduces stress, and promotes healthy family functioning.

The Department works collaboratively with both internal and external stakeholders to strengthen efforts to efficiently identify and reach Service members and families who may be at risk for abuse. The goal is to connect them with supportive services that improve protective factors, promote family well-being, and ultimately increase mission readiness.

26. Do you believe that the Department's Family Advocacy Program is resourced and structured adequately to achieve the goal of supporting victims and healing families following acts of domestic violence and child abuse?

The FAP (Family Advocacy Program) is an essential readiness enabler that supports warfighter lethality and strategic deterrence by safeguarding the health, safety, and resilience of military families, which is the foundational support system of every Service member. Unaddressed domestic abuse, child abuse and harmful behavior directly impair a Service member's ability to maintain mission focus, deploy effectively, or perform the warfighter mission.

The FAP is a voluntary clinical intervention program that provides supportive services, including assessment, counseling, advocacy and treatment. FAP operates within a Coordinate Community Response (CCR), which brings together all relevant entities across the DoD involved in incidents of domestic abuse or child abuse and neglect. All entities within the Coordinated Community Response, including the Family Advocacy Program must be appropriately resourced and supported. A well-resourced response is important to protecting holding abusers accountable and preserving military readiness across the force.

If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about FAP and how we might scale it to prevent domestic violence and child abuse while increasing support to the victims.

Department of Defense Education Activity, DOD Schools, and Dependent Education

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

As a former school superintendent of 150,000 students with 18,000 employees and 170 schools, I am keenly interested in the performance of DoD Education Activity (DoDEA) students and teachers. I am aware that DoDEA is a high-performing school system ranked best in the United States on the Nation's report card in 2024. DoDEA students' average scores ranged from 14 to 25 points higher than corresponding national average and held steady while national average scores mostly decreased.

28. In your view, are DODEA's headquarters overhead costs, including its funding and employment of personnel above the school level, comparable to such costs in highly-ranked public school districts in the United States? Please explain your answer.

I don't have enough information at this time to provide a fully informed response. If confirmed, I will look into this matter and take appropriate action to ensure DoDEA is operating in a fiscally responsible manner while applying my experience as a senior K-12 administrator.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 authorized DODEA to implement School Advisory Committees across all DODEA schools.

29. If confirmed, how will you ensure this implementation runs smoothly and ensures all stakeholders, including parents, have input and oversight over DODEA schools?

In my experience, DoDEA must partner with parents and guardians to ensure that their child's educational needs are met. As I understand it, DoDEA and Congress built robust parental involvement provisions in law and policy. If confirmed, I will support DoDEA's continued collaborations with parents and guardians.

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

It is my understanding that DoDEA carefully monitors student-to-teacher ratios in order to meet or exceed Congressional mandate. If confirmed, I will evaluate whether adjustments are necessary. Ultimately, the smaller the class size, the better the learning for our students, but there is a balance between class size and efficient use of resources.

31. In your view, how, if at all, should the quality and availability of local public education factor into Department and military service basing decisions?

As superintendent of Wake County Public School System, I had thousands of military dependents in my schools. More broadly, it is my understanding the vast majority of

military connected children are served by local educational agencies. If confirmed I will study this matter closely and take appropriate action to ensure that the quality and availability of public schools are considered when making basing decisions.

Post COVID-19 pandemic, schools across the country have reported behavioral challenges with students returning to the classroom. DODEA is not immune to this trend.

32. If confirmed, how will you ensure schools and teachers have appropriate support staff to manage students' mental health, behavior challenges, and other special needs concerns?

Thank you, if confirmed I will evaluate this issue.

33. If confirmed, how would you improve teacher hiring at DODEA to ensure teachers are in place at the beginning of every school year? In your view, would any additional authorities be required to speed up the hiring process?

In my experience, hiring principals and hiring teachers are the two most important jobs education leaders have. It is my understanding that the DoDEA Director made teacher hiring a top priority. I do not have any recommendations regarding the need for additional hiring authorities at this time as it is my understanding that DoDEA has significantly improved the process over the last year so the majority of classrooms around the world have full-time teachers in place at the beginning of the school year. Given my deep background in this area, I look forward to learning more.

Health Care Quality and Access

34. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take with respect to each of the following:

- **Eliminating performance variability throughout the Military Health System (MHS).**

If confirmed, reducing unwarranted variation in the MHS will be a priority. I believe there is goodness and power to harness in the Defense Health Agency to ensure more uniformity in how Service members and their families access care, both in military hospitals and clinics and in the private sector care network. To start, increasing the transparency of trustworthy data allows us to target facilities or regions experiencing too much variation. We would then either change policy, procedures, or resources to reduce such variation.

- **Improving health outcomes and the experience of care for all of the Department’s beneficiaries—in both the direct and purchased care components of the MHS.**

I appreciated the discussion held during the SASC hearing on stabilizing the MHS to prepare for large-scale combat operations. From listening to that thoughtful discussion and from what I have read in my preparation, the MHS is experiencing significant resource shortfalls that are now impacting the experience of care for DoD beneficiaries. If confirmed, I would ensure that the planning and programming of the MHS is, first and foremost, requirements-based and aligned to the needs of our Nation’s warfighters. Health outcomes are notoriously difficult to measure, and even harder to directly manage.

If confirmed, I would first review what health outcomes the MHS currently measures, then see what else we can measure without creating undue bureaucratic burdens on patients. I would also want these outcomes to be impactful to the DoD beneficiary population. Of particular interest to me in addition to the health outcomes of our beneficiaries is the preparedness of our medical force.

- **Creating a value-based MHS—ensuring the delivery of accessible, high-quality health care at a reasonable cost to both the Department and its beneficiaries.**

If confirmed, I would create a commonsense set of outcomes that matter to warfighters and patients, then review the planning and financial programming for the MHS to increase the DoD’s ability to improve outcomes. My understanding is that the first step towards value-based care is defining value, then deciding between population-based capitation, episodic funding, or a combination of the two. Objectively, value is outcomes divided by cost. From what I understand, the MHS’s buying power continues to diminish with flatlined budgets and inflation; the MHS today may well be the cheapest health care in the United States. However, that does not mean it is the best value to the government or taxpayers.

Military Health System Reform

35. Do you support the implementation of the Military Health System (MHS) reforms mandated by the NDAAs for FYs 2017, 2019, 2020, and 2021?

Yes, I support the reforms mandated by the NDAAs for FYs 2017, 2019, 2020, and 2021 and will continue to oversee the implementation of MHS reform and modernization.

36. If confirmed, what would you do to change the culture within the military services, such that their leadership will fully embrace changes necessary to improve the readiness of the medical force?

As a combat commander, I always gathered my medical personnel prior to significant combat operations and reinforced to them that the warfighters could do their mission because they knew they had the world's best medics, nurses and surgeons to provide care in the golden hour. If confirmed, I would start with this ethos as the premise for changing culture.

There have been many studies on the most effective organizational framework of the MHS since World War II, and the creation of the Defense Health Agency was the middle-of-the-road option to centralize headquarters-level functions, lessen variation, and reduce costs. If confirmed, I would first identify and seek to understand the views of the Military Department leadership with respect to MHS reform.

If I assess that there is a current need for additional actions, I will work transparently and collaboratively to reduce any tension, because at the end of the day, the government needs a health system that works best for warfighters and all DoD beneficiaries without adding undue pressure to the Defense budget.

37. In your view, are the Military Departments' medical forces properly sized to meet the joint medical requirements set forth in operational plans implementing the 2022 NDS and in the recent Joint Medical Estimate?

While I understand there is an Interim National Defense Strategy, I am not privy to its contents. Based on recent testimony and public information, it's reasonable to assume force sustainment and skill maintenance is a challenge. If confirmed, I would look at the current requirements against those estimated for large scale combat operations in addition to opportunities for partnerships and assignments that produce readiness.

38. In your view, is DOD's current education, training, and career development approach sufficient to ensure a military trauma care workforce that is ready to deliver expert health care (including combat casualty care) in support of the full range of military operations, domestically and abroad?

Having watched the recent SASC hearing on MHS readiness, I believe there is room to improve in all these areas. If confirmed, I would look at these programs independently and as a system to determine where we can improve. The expert witnesses at the hearing made it clear that the DoD's current medical force generation and sustainment pipelines likely need a strategic review to improve the effectiveness of trauma workforce capabilities for combat casualty care.

The Defense Health Program's budget has declined by more than 10% in inflation-adjusted dollars over the past 10 years against a backdrop of continually rising healthcare costs in the United States. While healthcare accounts for 19% of the GDP of the United States, healthcare costs account for only about 8% of the DOD budget.

39. What will you do to ensure adequate funding is restored to the Defense Health Program to ensure quality medical care for servicemembers and their families, and to ensure that our medical facilities are scaled and equipped to be state-of-the-art combat medical platforms in the event of armed conflict?

I am hesitant to make direct comparisons between the ratio of health care expenses in the broader economy with that of the Defense budget. For example, the private sector does not need to maintain a cadre of highly skilled Active Duty forces ready to deploy at a moment's notice nor procure advanced weapons systems whereas the DoD does. However, I do think we want to make sure that the Defense Health Program's resourcing posture better aligns with the needs of DoD beneficiaries.

If confirmed, I would explore policies to drive more efficient, and deliberate, overlap between health care delivery and medical readiness to make sure health care budgets improve the health and well-being of warfighters, their families, retirees, and all other DoD beneficiaries.

Mental and Behavioral Health Care

40. If confirmed, what actions would you take to ensure that sufficient mental and behavioral health resources are available to service members in theater and to service members and families at home station locations, including members and families of the reserve components?

From what I understand, DoD, and our country broadly, has come a long way in destigmatizing mental health care. However, that destigmatization increased demand for mental health that now exceeds supply, both in the military and civilian communities. If confirmed, I would continue to expand access to virtual tele-mental health services to mitigate shortages and make sure that requirements for mental health align and support the needs of DoD beneficiaries.

41. In your view, how could the Department better integrate the provision of mental and behavioral health care services and non-medical counseling?

If confirmed, I need to understand the true delineation of responsibilities and requirements between mental health care and non-medical counseling. There are clear triage processes on the medical side, but that becomes more abstract on the non-medical side. Ideally, we should have referral processes that can get patients to the

right type of care, be it medical or non-medical, and both should be destigmatized as much possible.

42. If confirmed, what would you do to improve the delivery of behavioral health services in the MHS through telehealth? How would you expand such capabilities in both the direct and purchased care components of the MHS?

If confirmed, I would do a “troop to task” analysis. First, I would assess what telehealth capabilities currently exist for mental health in the Military Departments and at the Defense Health Agency. Then I would require an evaluation to compare efficacy and identify gaps between the various capabilities. There may be an opportunity for more deliberate overlap to improve the effectiveness of current telehealth while expanding options for Service members and DoD beneficiaries. If there are more requirements than there are providers, then common sense tells us that the program should be scaled.

Suicide Prevention

In 2023, the Department of Defense released the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee (SPRIRC) report which included recommendations to the Department to improve quality of life, aid in building healthy climates and cultures, and better address stigma as a barrier to help-seeking, amongst other things.

43. If confirmed, what efforts, if any, from the SPRIRC report implementation will you continue to prioritize?

Military suicide prevention is a strategic imperative to ensure resilience and readiness. It is my understanding that the DoD is currently executing its largest suicide prevention effort informed by the work of the independent review committee mandated by Congress. If confirmed, I will examine actions underway, actions that have been executed and any planned actions to ensure they are appropriately prioritized.

44. If confirmed, what additional efforts would you undertake to strengthen the Department’s suicide prevention programs to reduce the number of suicides among service members, including in the reserve components, and their families?

My understanding is that the Department is focusing on supporting clinical and non-clinical suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention response programs and services through a coordinated and comprehensive public health approach. This approach aims to prevent or reduce suicide by identifying risk indicators to prevent

suicide from occurring. If confirmed, I will look for ways to improve upon these promising efforts to prevent harmful behaviors.

Officer Personnel Management System

45. In your view, is the DOD executing existing authorities to improve permeability between the active and reserve components to the fullest extent?

Yes, it is my understanding that DoD uses the existing authorities to its fullest allowing unrestrictive transfers between active and reserve components.

46. Do you believe current DOD and Military Service procedures and practices for reviewing the records of officers pending the President's nomination for promotion or assignment, especially those with adverse or reportable information, are sufficient to enable fully-informed decisions by the Secretaries of the Military Departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, and the President?

Yes, it is my understanding that DoD has standardized procedures for all officers to ensure senior leaders are able to make the most informed decisions.

47. Recent NDAAs provided significant flexibility to the constraints imposed by the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA). In your judgement are any additional authorities required for the military departments to manage their officers better to implement the National Defense Strategy?

I am not aware of any recommended changes that I would propose at this time. However, if confirmed, I will continue to explore ways to improve both legislation and policies to meet the needs of the Department while providing the flexibility desired by talented leaders in an increasingly competitive job market.

Joint Officer Management

48. In your view, do the requirements associated with becoming a Joint Qualified Officer (JQO), and the link between attaining joint qualification and eligibility for promotion to General/Flag Officer rank, continue to be consistent with the operational and professional demands of military service line officers?

The JQO process has always been of interest to me as it is my understanding that the Goldwater-Nichols Act created the requirement based upon, in part, an assessment of the failure of Operation Eagle Claw in Iran. With the ultimate end state to be more proficient at warfighting, it would seem to me that service on a joint task force and on a joint staff in combat would possess greater value than duty in a staff billet. That

notwithstanding, it is my understanding that in general the current process is working well. General and flag officers need to be able to think critically and creatively to apply military power to inform national strategy, conduct globally integrated operations, and fight under conditions of disruptive change. If confirmed, I will continue to look at this process with my staff to ensure that the Department is getting the appropriate return on investment in this area.

49. In your view, should the requirement to be a JQO be eliminated as a consideration in selecting officers for promotion and assignment?

No, I do not believe it should be eliminated. It is my understanding that in general the current process is working well. If confirmed, I will continue to look at this process with my staff to ensure that the Department is getting the appropriate return on investment in this area.

Professional Military Education

50. What changes or reform would you recommend to the professional military education system to ensure that tomorrow's leaders have the tools necessary to ensure the Department is able to meet the national defense objectives of the future?

In my view, the PME system is one of the best investments that the Department makes. From basic leadership courses to war colleges, the continuous education and training of our professional military forces are what help to differentiate us from every other military in the world. PME is how the Department develops the intellectually nimble warfighters required to address enduring and emerging issues, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and information to meet the mission. In an operating environment that is increasingly complex, fluid, and lethal, this system is ever more essential to ensuring that the profession of arms keeps pace and that our warfighters are prepared to succeed under any conditions.

I know the Department is currently developing a report about PME effectiveness in response to congressional requirements. If confirmed, I will review these findings with my peers and subject matter experts in the Department, Military Services, and Military Education Institutions, and act swiftly to implement recommended changes – as appropriate – to enhance PME and make certain that it continues to serve our warfighters, cultivate needed capabilities, and sharpen our competitive edge relative to the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Military Service Academies

51. In your view, what is the unique benefit of a military service academy compared to other officer commissioning sources?

All commissioning sources have their strengths. As a commander at many levels, I had the privilege to receive, train, mentor and lead officers from all sourcing pathways. I firmly believe the military service academies (MSAs) produce high quality commissioned officers and leaders. If confirmed, I will examine the resources provided to all commissioning sources to ensure they are efficiently used and maximized to promote a lethal force.

52. Do you believe the military service academies currently are meeting the needs of the services in terms of producing new officers with necessary academic experience, military discipline, and character?

I firmly believe the MSAs are top-tier institutions with a strong history of producing officers ready to meet the challenges of leading in the world's most capable military. If confirmed, I will support efforts to promote a lethal force by ensuring the MSAs have the resources and support they need to continue their strong tradition of excellence.

53. What is your assessment of the efficacy of the policies and processes in place at 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?

No cadets or midshipmen should have to fear retaliation for reporting a sexual assault or sexual harassment. However, challenges remain, as do opportunities for improvement. I understand the establishment of the MSA Climate Transformation Task Force (CTTF) was a vital component in working with the academies to address the root causes of these problems. I've been told that the Task Force also helped the Academies to identify key changes to policies and programs aimed at prevention of harmful behaviors and improvement in cadet and midshipman behavior overall.

If confirmed, I will work with the Military Departments to ensure leadership is committed to achieving long-lasting change. I will also collaborate closely with the leadership of the MSAs to identify and address the gaps that allow these behaviors to persist, ensuring a safer and more supportive environment for all cadets and midshipmen.

In March 2023, Secretary Austin directed an On-Site Installation Review (OSIE) be conducted at the military service academies (MSAs) after an increase in the estimated prevalence of unwanted sexual contact (USC), sexual harassment (SH), and other

concerning climate issues at the MSAs during the 2021-2022 academic year. These MSA OSIEs are intended to continue biennially.

54. If confirmed, do you commit to continuing these important reviews?

If confirmed, I will encourage cooperation on improving climate and integrated prevention efforts at the MSAs and will leverage the CTTF to continue these important reviews.

Military Compensation

55. 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. I believe the Department must maintain a robust military compensation package so that it may recruit and retain the high-quality military force the Nation must have to meet its national defense objectives.

56. The 14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, released in January 2025, concluded that the current military compensation package is strongly competitive with the civilian labor market. What is your assessment of the current military pay package and its adequacy in recruiting and retaining servicemembers?

It is my understanding that the current military compensation package compares favorably with those offered in the private sector, and a strong compensation package is one of many reasons why young men and women join the military Services. If confirmed, I will continuously monitor the military compensation package to ensure it contributes positively toward the Department's ability to recruit and retain the force we need.

57. In recent years, Congress provided a substantial pay raise for junior enlisted troops, which culminated in a 14.5 percent increase in basic pay for grades E-1 to E-4 and a 4.5 percent across-the-board annual pay increase for the rest of the military in the FY25 NDAA. What changes, if any, would you recommend to the current military pay and benefits package, if confirmed?

I do not have any recommended changes at this time. However, if confirmed, I look forward to holistically reviewing all elements of military compensation and recommending changes where warranted.

58. What specific recommendations do you have for balancing rising military personnel expenditures with other defense spending priorities, such as procurement and modernization?

I am aware that military personnel costs are a significant portion of the Department's budget. We must scrutinize growth in these costs and the accretion of new entitlement programs in order to balance them against other critical warfighting and readiness needs of the Force. Ultimately, we need a trained and ready warfighter with a family that is properly cared for to deploy the procured and modernized equipment.

End Strength and Personnel Requirements

59. In your judgment, what role should the USD(P&R) play in ensuring responsible management of military manpower across both the active and reserve components?

The OUSD(P&R) has a critical role of managing military manpower (both active and reserve components). If confirmed, I will review all previous efforts and take appropriate action to address any unresolved issues. Importantly, assessing the force structure alignment with the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance and other administration priorities is paramount to developing sound personnel policy.

60. Is the current military end strength sufficient to meet national defense objectives? If not, what end strength is necessary?

While I don't yet have a comprehensive understanding of the Department's operational plans and requirements, if confirmed, I commit to conducting a review of current military end-strength policies. I will collaborate closely with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as other uniformed and civilian leaders to address personnel and readiness matters that would inform future deliberations on the size and composition of our military force levels to meet the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance and other objectives.

Recruiting and Retention

The 2024 National Defense Strategy Commission stated that "The DoD workforce and the all-volunteer force provide an unmatched advantage. However, recruiting failures have shrunk the force and raise serious questions about the all-volunteer force in peacetime, let alone in major combat." In addition, DOD studies indicate that only about 23% of today's youth population is eligible for military service, and only a fraction of those who meet military accession standards are interested in serving.

61. In your view, what are the main reasons that less than a quarter of 17–24-year-olds are eligible for military service, and how would you propose increasing the size of that pool without degrading the quality of recruits?

Importantly, I've watched this number go from 1 in 3 eligible when I was serving as a senior leader to now 1 in 4. That's a significant decrease in eligibility. Available research indicates nearly half of today's youth candidates are ineligible for multiple reasons, primarily obesity and other medical conditions. It is my understanding that the Department is working to expand the pool of eligible candidates through the continuous review of disqualifying medical conditions and modernizing accession testing to better assess an applicant's potential to serve. I am also aware that some of the Services have invested in Future Service Member Prep Courses to provide necessary education and nutrition assistance to qualified applicants as a means to ensure a more successful basic training outcome.

62. If required to choose between maintaining high recruitment and retention standards and achieving authorized end strength levels, which would be more important, in your view?

I firmly believe that we should never have to choose between high standards and our ability to meet end strength. High recruitment and retention standards are the foundation of our lethal force. As such, the Department should continue to recruit and retain the right force composition to optimize end strength and achieve Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance requirements.

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

While the current trends are positive for both recruiting and retention, my understanding is that propensity to serve has historically been holding steady at approximately 10 percent across the last decade. This stems from a confluence of factors influencing young people's career decisions such as a growing military-civilian divide, low unemployment rates, a shrinking veteran population, and other market factors.

If confirmed, I believe that the Department must undertake a nationwide, multi-pronged approach that highlights military service as an attractive career choice. I understand the Department is currently undertaking initiatives to improve the recruiting environment and process, including expanding eligibility, growing propensity, and improving processes.

64. What impacts do current medical and other qualifications for enlistment have on the number of individuals eligible for military service? If confirmed, what changes to such qualifications, if any, would you recommend to increase the number of individuals eligible for service without degrading the quality of recruits?

Current data reflects medical and other qualifications disqualify a significant number of the eligible population. If confirmed, I will assess current programs that help the Department reach eligible recruits earlier and begin emphasizing fitness to serve.

I firmly believe that in order to ensure we maintain a highly capable fighting force, it is paramount that we maintain our high standards for enlistment. I am also aware that the Department continuously revises and adapts medical accession standards to account for advances in medical science and the needs of the Department.

If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues across OSD and the Military Departments to ensure qualification standards are sufficiently broad enough to ensure Service members can complete their required training, achieve the standards commensurate for each role, and are able to deploy world-wide so that we maintain a ready, agile, and lethal military force.

65. Rather than relying solely on ever-higher compensation for a shrinking pool of volunteers, what creative steps would you take, if confirmed, to expand the pool of eligible recruits and improve Army recruiting?

We must recognize that one size doesn't fit all when compensating our new recruits. It is my understanding that the Department uses a combination of monetary and non-monetary incentives to address the needs of both the Military Service and the recruit while ensuring the needs of the military Service are met. If confirmed, I will work with the Military Services to explore a wide range of non-monetary solutions.

66. What steps, if any, should be taken to ensure that current operational requirements and tempo do not adversely impact recruiting and retention?

Operational requirements and tempo will have different effects on each Service. My experience tells me that Service members join to fully execute their duties and serve the Nation at critical moments. Many recruits embrace the idea of deployment and making a difference for the country. However, I look forward to working with the Service Chiefs to ensure that these requirements and tempo don't overstress the force or leave some underutilized.

67. Several Services have reported record high retention rates to Congress in the last year. While this helps to offset recruiting challenges, how will you ensure the DOD's retention efforts are not only meeting end strength goals, but also ensuring retained personnel possess the right skills, experience, and readiness to meet future operational demands?

I believe this goes hand in hand with the assessment of end strength and force structure alignment with the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance and other administration priorities. Each Service has unique goals and requirements in shaping their force for current and future missions. I look forward to working with the Service Chiefs to enable them to reach their desired objectives.

Reserve Components

Historically, the reserve components have been positioned as a strategic reserve to be used in the event of significant armed conflict involving the United States. In the post-9/11 era, reserve forces have been used more extensively to support both contingency operations and ongoing military requirements in a garrison environment. Today, in addition to being an operational reserve, members of the reserve component are used continuously as a part-time workforce for the Department of Defense to perform its ongoing training and readiness requirements.

68. In your view, should the reserve components serve as a part-time workforce, an operational reserve, a strategic reserve, or some combination of those?

The Reserve Component has played an invaluable role in meeting the Department's operational requirements during nearly two and half decades of contingency operations. Our Reserve forces serve as force multipliers in every warfare domain and provide critical combat support capabilities not always resident in the Regular Component. As a result, demand for an operational reserve is expected to continue. As the Department continues to focus on increasing lethality, we must also ensure the Reserve Component is ready to fulfill its primary statutory role as a strategic reserve in a time of war, national emergency, or at such other times as the national security may require.

69. In light of your answer, do the reserve components require increased levels of full-time support and oversight by the active component, including improved equipment, increased training, adequate compensation and reimbursement, effective career management, balanced Professional Military Education requirements, and higher levels of overall resourcing for readiness going forward?

If confirmed, I will strive to ensure that the Department carefully balances continued operational demand for Reserve forces with their readiness to mobilize in times of war and also to ensure that the Reserve Component has what it needs to complete mission requirements.

70. In your view, what legislative reforms should be made in order to facilitate easier transitions for members of all components between active and reserve status?

I am not aware of the need for legislative reforms at this time. If confirmed, I will thoroughly review this matter and pursue legislative remedies, if necessary, via the Department's legislative proposal process.

Military Family Readiness and Support

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

Family readiness is an important tenet of warfighter readiness. Some of the most pressing issues facing Service members and their families are increased access to high quality child care, non-medical counseling services, and spouse education and employment support. These issues, along with many others, are vitally important to the readiness that allows our Service members to deploy far from home with the confidence that their families will be safe and have the tools they need to cope with what are often long absences. Our Nation demands a lot of its Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, Guardians, and their families. If confirmed, I am committed to partnering with DoD stakeholders and Congress to address these critical family readiness issues.

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

Access to quality, affordable child care is essential for the readiness and well-being of our military families and the strength of our force. If confirmed, my priority will be modernizing the child care compensation and staffing model to attract and retain qualified professionals and expanding capacity in our Child Development Centers to reduce waitlists and ensure all military families have access to the support they need.

73. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to improve military spouse employment?

Ensuring meaningful careers for military spouses is critical to the Department's ability to retain a high quality, all-volunteer force. If confirmed, I will direct my team to explore expansion of employment opportunities for military spouses both in the public and private sector and assess state certification portability requirements. The

Department, as the largest Federal workforce, must explore how we can internally leverage this amazing talent pool.

Support for Military Families with Special Needs

74. What is your view of the overall effectiveness of the exceptional family member program (EFMP)?

Supporting military families with disability-related needs is essential to mission readiness. If confirmed, I will assess the overall effectiveness of the Exceptional Family Member Program and commit to providing the necessary support to ensure continual program improvement.

75. If confirmed, how would you enhance support to a service member in navigating the TRICARE system to obtain the medical services and support required by a family member with special needs, regardless of where that family member is located?

I believe that reliable access to essential medical care for military families with special needs, regardless of location, is key not only to supporting our Service Members but also to ensuring overall readiness. I understand there are issues with the transition with some aspects of TRICARE. If confirmed, I'll work to resolve transition issues and to strengthen support for Service members traversing the TRICARE system.

76. If confirmed, how would you prioritize the implementation of section 582 of the NDAA for FY 2021, which mandates improvements and standardization of the EFMP across the Department?

It is my understanding that the implementation of Section 582 of the NDAA for FY 2021 is a priority for the Department. If confirmed, I commit to supporting the Department's effort to ensure implementation across the Military Departments, reviewing the data on implementation progress, and supporting efforts to enhance the program through additional program standardization.

Commissary and Military Exchange Systems

77. Have initiatives designed to enhance the commissary's ability to operate more like a private sector grocery store been effective in reducing commissary reliance on appropriated funds?

I understand that the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) has maintained a 25% savings for its patrons without requiring additional appropriated funds. Providing additional flexibilities could further reduce DeCA's reliance on appropriated funds.

The commissary system is one of the most valuable benefits afforded to the military community, but the Department has struggled to maintain its customer base.

78. What would you do to increase patronage of military commissaries, especially among junior enlisted members?

I am aware that DeCA has increased its customer base over the last three years and has recently leveraged a direct mail campaign to further increase use of the commissaries. Additionally, DeCA has implemented several reforms and efforts that have brought customers into the commissary. If confirmed I will review untapped methods for increasing commissary patronage amongst beneficiaries to include expanding delivery service pilots such as Click2Go, review store operating hours, establish loyalty programs, online ordering and pickup, and other popular features of retail grocers.

79. What role could the commissary system play in reducing food insecurity among military-connected families?

DeCA is DoD's first line of defense against food insecurity. I believe strengthening the commissary system could further reduce food insecurity and help those that need it most. If confirmed, I look forward to exploring concepts such as mobile commissary units, expansion of delivery services, online ordering, and discounts based upon pay grade.

80. Do you believe privatization of commissary stores in urban areas would enable the Department to focus on overseas and rural areas where the need for commissaries is greater?

Privatization requires study to determine if a commercial grocery chain can deliver a 25% savings benefit across all 235 commissary locations worldwide without requiring appropriated funds. If confirmed, I look forward to finding the best solution that takes all factors into account, including the benefit to Service members as well as the cost to taxpayers.

Department of Defense Civilian Workforce Matters

81. 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 civilian talent?

If confirmed, I will prioritize assessing the Department's civilian workforce morale and identifying any challenges they face. My goal is to ensure we have the right tools and environment to attract, retain, and support the highly skilled workforce essential to the DoD's critical mission.

82. What is your view of the effect on moral, and effectiveness of the DOD's civilian workforce in light of the Administration's proposed reductions in the workforce?

I recognize that proposed workforce reductions can create uncertainty and impact morale. If confirmed, I will prioritize assessing the effects of any such reductions on the DoD's civilian workforce and implement strategies to maintain a high-performing and resilient workforce dedicated to the Department's mission.

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

If confirmed, I will identify and address obstacles to effective and efficient civilian workforce management within the DoD, with the goal of optimizing support for the warfighter.

84. In your view, what are the benefits and detriments to the use of borrowed military manpower?

I don't believe borrowed military manpower (BMM) is sustainable, and I believe it detracts from combat readiness. Some may argue it serves as a stop-gap measure to fill critical areas in cases of labor shortage. However, in my experience short or long-term use of BMM leads to a decline in unit readiness and has negative impacts on individual careers when military members are assigned to duties outside their occupational specialties. If confirmed, I intend to assess the extent of BMM across the force and task the team to find ways to eliminate or reduce it so that we can keep our promise to the men and women who committed to serve in specific skill sets, advance in those career fields, and master their craft.

Section 129a of title 10, United States Code, states the Department "may not reduce the civilian workforce programmed full-time equivalent levels unless the Secretary conducts an appropriate analysis of the impacts of such reductions on workload, military force structure, lethality, readiness, operational effectiveness, stress on the military force, and fully burdened costs."

85. If confirmed, do you commit to adhering to the law to ensure any reductions of the workforce do not adversely impact military readiness?

Yes, if confirmed, I commit to adhering to the law and ensuring civilian workforce shaping of efforts do not have an adverse impact on military readiness.

Cyber and Scientific-Technical Workforce

86. In your view, how effective is the Cyber Excepted Service Workforce authority under section 1599f of title 10, United States Code, in helping the Department meet its requirements for a highly qualified and competent cyber workforce? Do you have any recommendations for improvement for that authority?

It's clear the DoD has a cyber talent shortage, in part because of stiff competition from the civilian sector where DoD salaries struggle to compete. Building on my understanding of the Cyber Excepted Service workforce, I will, if confirmed, work with cyber leadership to identify and implement enhancements to the program, as needed.

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

I believe it is crucially important that the Department seeks to recruit and retain the best technical and digital workforce across the total force, including civilian and Active Duty military personnel. The obvious advantages of uniformed personnel in these roles are they bring a warfighter focus and come at a fixed labor cost. The perceived disadvantages could be frequent reassignment and requirements to deploy. If confirmed, I will assess how we train and assign our Service members to support their ability to maintain currency in constantly changing fields. In addition to balancing the active duty and civilian workforce, I believe we need to assess how we best utilize the talent of our Reserve Component personnel.

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

If confirmed, I will work with DoD laboratory leadership to review existing authorities and ensure their strategic deployment to attract, develop, and retain talent within the labs.

- 89. Do you have recommendations for how to better track the workforce with highly specialized technical skills, including cyber, acquisition, scientific and engineering degrees, to ensure that DOD has sufficient people to assess whether DOD is able to compete with the private sector for talent?**

I believe that managing talent is instrumental to maintain our global competitive edge. If confirmed, I will examine the workforce and collaborate with the appropriate officials to ensure DoD is able to compete with the private sector for talent.

Senior Executive Service

- 90. 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, I will prioritize selecting Senior Executive Service candidates who demonstrate exceptional leadership, technical expertise, sound judgment under pressure, and a commitment to fostering a positive and productive work environment for the DoD's civilian workforce.

- 91. 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 champion accountability within the SES by ensuring rigorous performance management at all levels. This includes establishing clear expectations, providing regular feedback, recognizing exemplary performance, and addressing underperformance promptly and decisively.

- 92. Are you satisfied with the subject matter and rigor of SES professional development programs currently available across DOD? If not, what changes would you make to these programs, if confirmed?**

If confirmed, I will assess the effectiveness of current SES professional development programs and implement improvements to ensure they equip leaders with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the complex challenges facing the Department.

Congressional Oversight

In order to exercise legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress receive timely testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic

communications, and other information from the executive branch.

93. 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.

a. Yes

94. 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.

a. Yes

95. 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.

a. Yes

96. 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.

a. Yes

97. 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.

a. Yes

98. 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.

a. Yes

99. 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.

a. Yes