

Military Personnel Subcommittee

House Armed Services Committee



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Wilson Opening Statement for Hearing on Morale, Welfare and Recreation Programs

Washington, D.C.—U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.), the chairman of the Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee, released the following opening statement for today's hearing on Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs within the Department of Defense (DoD):

"The Subcommittee on Military Personnel will begin the 2011 hearing cycle with two hearings on Department Of Defense's non-appropriated fund activities. Today, we will focus on Morale, Welfare, and Recreation programs. Tomorrow, the subcommittee will turn its attention to commissaries and exchanges—DOD's grocery and department stores.

"This subcommittee has always viewed the wide range of programs that comprise the military morale, welfare, and recreation, or MWR community as essential elements within a healthy military community. The subcommittee remains strongly committed to supporting these programs.

"However, it is clear that the DoD has correctly crossed over into a new era of austerity marked by increased fiscal scrutiny of all programs and an unrelenting pursuit of increased budget efficiency. As a recipient of appropriated funds, MWR programs will be subjected to increased pressure to maintain effectiveness while operating more efficiently.

"While demands for increased effectiveness and efficiency are to be expected, I fear that misperceptions about the absence of a link between MWR programs and combat readiness will place those programs at greater risk of being cut too deeply. I believe that vibrant MWR programs are critical to the health of the military community they support and that superior combat capability is directly dependent on the strength of the military community.

"We must not allow MWR programs to become easy targets for the budget cutters. Certainly, there must be cuts and identifying the programs to be reduced will require difficult decisions. It is my hope that MWR managers are prepared to make those decisions and demonstrate the willingness to find savings. But those managers must also be prepared to fight hard to factually justify the programs that are truly critical to service members and their families.

"We hope to learn more about the strategy that MWR managers will pursue in the coming months to meet the demands of this new era of budget austerity."

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