

Statement of
Representative Jackie Speier
Outside Perspective on Military Personnel
Policy
Military Personnel Subcommittee
March 12, 2019

I would like to welcome everyone to this afternoon's Military Personnel Subcommittee hearing. Today we have a panel of experts who will share their perspectives on how to improve and modernize military personnel policy to sustain the all-volunteer-force. I want to thank our witnesses for participating and sharing their views on this important subject.

The services need to end business as usual. All too often, they are operating out of date, one size fits all recruiting and retention policies under inflexible cultures. I worry that this is hindering them from reaching and retaining the right talent. Too often, the response to proposed personnel reforms is “the system worked for me,” “they know what they signed up for,” or “that’s not how it works.” Those adages are simply not good enough. They are the hallmarks of a culture resistant to change, unprepared to face mounting challenges.

The services continue to use age old policies to shape the force instead of reshaping how end-strength is used.

Meanwhile, the pool of recruits is contracting. 80% of recruits have family service connections, there's a highly competitive labor market, and many potential servicemembers don't meet physical standards or just don't want to serve. The status quo is not sustainable.

The Army for example was unable to meet its end-strength requirements in 2018 and will likely fall short again in 2019. The Navy has for close to a decade has not

placed the correct number of trained sailors on ships, while the Air Force has struggled to keep pilots and qualified maintenance personnel at all levels.

The competition for talent is fierce, the qualified pool is dwindling, and the bars to service seem to be increasing. The culture of the generation the services are attempting to recruit and retain has also changed. They think differently, communicate differently and define what they value differently than the generation of current leaders, and certainly of those that developed the policies used today.

These are complex, hard problems and we're not going to solve them today. What we can do, though, is get smarter about how we think about solving them. Our witnesses are personnel experts and they are also expert in conceptualizing our approach to personnel problems. They can help us find new ways to collect and use data to make personnel decisions, suggest novel approaches for evaluating programs' efficacy, and think creatively.

We have a responsibility to take these problems seriously and not chalk up shortcomings to the inscrutable lifestyles

and preferences of “kids these days.”

Leadership means listening to and learning from those we serve. And the great benefit of living in the 21st century is that even when the people we wish we could talk to are too busy texting on their cell phones and playing candy crush, we can collect data on them and just learn in the aggregate.

I believe the services need to think creatively and beyond their current cultures about how to manage people. The central question for you today is: how can we create Service personnel policies that are appropriately managed and sufficiently

modern and flexible in order to recruit, retain, and compensate the right mix of talented service members throughout their careers to sustain the all-volunteer force?

I am interested to hear from our witnesses their views on what the future requirements are for effective military personnel policies and what effects these policies may have on the all-volunteer force.

Before I introduce our first panel, let me offer Ranking Member Kelly an opportunity to make any opening remarks.

Thank you, Mr. Kelly.

Each witness will have the opportunity to present his or her testimony, and each Member will have an opportunity to question the witnesses for five minutes. We respectfully ask the witnesses to summarize their testimony in five minutes or less. Your written comments and statements will be made part of the hearing record.

Let me welcome our panel:

Dr. Beth J. Asch

Senior Economist

RAND Corporation

Mr. Todd Harrison

Director of Defense Budget Analysis

Center for Strategic & International Studies
and

Mr. Peter Levine

Senior Fellow

Institute for Defense Analyses

With that, Dr Asch you may make your
opening statement.