

**Statement of
Representative Jackie Speier
Military Personnel Subcommittee
Diversity in Recruiting and Retention:
Increasing Diversity in the Military
December 10, 2019**

The hearing will now come to order. I want to welcome everyone to this hearing of the Military Personnel subcommittee on diversity in recruiting and retention.

We are here to discuss what the services are doing to increase diversity, which includes representation of women and people of color.

We are stronger when our military represents and connects to those it protects. Our small “warrior caste” cannot bear the burden of service alone. Our democracy is stronger when we all understand the true costs of wars waged on our behalf.

Diversity is also an asset—minorities and women have unique perspectives they bring to the fight and diverse teams are more innovative and effective. We also need to take advantage of all the talent at our disposal.

Promoting diversity is also about justice and safety. Women and minorities have always served in our military, even though for the

majority of our history military policies and culture have been hostile to their presence. Those groups are now serving in increasing numbers, and we need them more than ever. They deserve the opportunity to excel unencumbered by biases and barriers, and free from hate crimes or sexual assaults that threaten their safety.

We've included retention in this hearing, because across every service, senior ranks are less diverse. Junior servicemembers are more likely to stay in the military and rise when they can see and be mentored by leaders who look like them.

Today's first panel shows what can happen when the services don't focus on diversity in retention. I don't doubt any of your qualifications or commitments, but our military personnel aren't all white men and our personnel chiefs shouldn't be either. I realize that this is not always the case, but it happens more often than not.

There are approximately 1.3 million active duty members in the military. 83.5% are men and 16.5% are women. 17.1% are black or African American, 16.1% are Hispanic or Latino, 4.5% are Asian, and around 30,000 are non-citizens. 70% are white. Enlisted members are more diverse than officers and the percentages have all increased over the past decade, but it is not enough.

I am interested to hear what each service is doing to tackle this challenge. How are you using influencers such as parents, coaches, and educators to recruit diverse populations? What kinds of public service

campaigns have you launched? What's worked and who have you collaborated with?

I also want to know how you're dealing with the ways belonging to an underrepresented group can negatively influence an individual's experience in the military and cause them to end their service.

Research shows us that challenges like raising a family or dealing with inadequate health care providers are harder for women, who are still disproportionately expected to be primary caregivers. And complaints by women and minorities are still taken less seriously by doctors.

Underexamined cultural norms, practices, and legacies also inhibit the success of women and people of color. Many notions about what constitutes a good "Marine," "Soldier," or "warrior" simply reflect traits that happen to be held by predominant groups in the service—such as physical prowess—rather than those that actually correlate with success, such as empathic leadership. In many cases, evaluating all servicemembers by traditional expectations isn't equality or fairness, it's applying flawed criteria that reflect the skills of incumbent groups to a dynamic population with other strengths.

I would like to hear how the services are grappling with these complex issues, not just by creating policies that give all servicemembers equal opportunity to excel, but by confronting these cultural issues head-on at every level.

I also hope our second panel can help us understand—based on their expertise in this field, activism in servicemember and veteran communities, and experience on and departure from active duty—how these policies look in the field and what else the services should consider.

Finally, I'd like both panels to tell us what Congress can do. Whether it's nominations to the service academies or setting policy, we can affect diversity in the military and we hope to partner with all of you in that effort.

I would now like to welcome our distinguished panelists.

Panel 1:

Lieutenant General Thomas C. Seamands, USA

Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1

United States Army

Vice Admiral John B. Nowell, Jr., USN

Chief of Naval Personnel

United States Navy

Lieutenant General Brian T. Kelly, USAF

Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services

United States Air Force

Lieutenant General Michael A. Rocco, USMC

Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs

United States Marine Corps

I ask unanimous consent to allow members not on the subcommittee to participate in today's hearing and be allowed to ask questions after all subcommittee members have been recognized.

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