

26 March 2025 Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing Status of Military Service Academies

Witnesses: **USMA** **LTG Steven Gilland**
 USNA **VADM Yvette Davids**
 USAFA **LtGen Tony Baernfeind**

SEN Tuberville [00:00:14] Take your seats, please.

SEN Tuberville [00:00:18] I'd like to call this, uh, committee hearing in session. Arms. Senate Armed Services subcommittee on Personnel meets this afternoon to conduct oversight and receive testimony on the status of the military service academies. Thank you for being here. The last time this body conducted a hearing on this topic, with these witnesses or with any witnesses with the academies, was more than 30 years ago. We're fortunate to have these three distinguished officers here today. Lieutenant General Steven Gilland, US Military Academy, Vice Admiral Yvette Davids of the Naval Academy, and Lieutenant General Tony Bauernfeind of the United States Air Force Academy.

LtGen Bauernfeind [00:00:58] Bauernfeind, sir.

SEN Tuberville [00:01:00] Bauernfeind. It's going to be a long day. Yeah. As this is the first meeting of the personnel subcommittee in the 119th Congress, let me begin by saying I look forward to working with you, ranking Member. Warren, thank you for being here. As we continue the bipartisan tradition of the Armed Services Committee in developing the National Defense Authorization Act. Nothing is more bipartisan than supporting our men and women in uniform and their families. This subcommittee has a long history of prioritizing the well-being and morale of our service members, and I'm eager to continue that work as new chairman. The military service academies are foundational to the successes of the military officer corps. In many ways, the service academies established the culture of their respective service. Moreover, the academics occupy an important position or the academies occupy an important position in our society. They are perhaps the last universities in the country that focus on building character and improving the moral morality of their student body. The American people often perceive the academies as being emblematic of the entire U.S. military. For better or for worse, and over the last several years, the academies have lost sight in some areas of the fundamental reason for their existence, which is to Commission officers. Officers with the education required by the respective military branches. All three academies have been sued for engaging in race based affirmative action that is now prohibited at every other university in the country. We have repeatedly heard over the last several years that our diversity is our strength. It is not. Diversity can be an awesome advantage, but our unity of effort and shared benefits in our Constitution and common values are our strength. Diversity for the sake of diversity alone weakens us. A professor at the Air Force Academy proudly offered a Washington Post op ed proclaiming that she teaches critical race theory to cadets. Both West Point and the Air Force Academy established diversity and inclusion minors, which can be trendy in other university settings, but were so unpopular with cadets that when they were abruptly canceled by President Trump, hardly anyone noticed. More importantly, any effort to teach our future leaders to judge or sort people by immutable characteristics like race runs counter to the Constitution and is devastating to order to good order and discipline. Last fall, the Naval Academy abruptly canceled a lecture after it was revealed that the speaker planned to use the opportunity to make a partisan political speech. But one must ask, why was this speaker invited in the first place? The academies must always remember, or the Academies must always

remember, why they were created in the first place. The American people devote tremendous resources to maintaining all of these institutions. If the academics are not entirely focused on building officers of character and to lead our nation's sons and daughters in combat, then what is the purpose? I hope our witnesses will address these criticisms but also tell us about the great things that are happening every day at the academies. The vast majority of the cadets and midshipmen, faculty and staff at the service academies are proper, properly focused on the only mission that matters, which is defending our Constitution and the American people. I thank the witnesses for appearing here today and I look forward to their testimony. Now turn the microphone over to Senator Warren.

SEN Warren [00:04:36] So thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm also looking forward to continuing the bipartisan tradition of this subcommittee, and I hope to work with you and all of our members to make sure that we improve the lives of our service members, their families, and our civilian workforce so that they can stay focused on the mission of keeping Americans safe. I want to start by extending my condolences to the four families that just lost loved ones during a training mission in Lithuania. They remind us those who go into harm's way and their families are always at risk, and put it on the line for the people of the United States of America. We are a deeply grateful nation. Um, I am glad that we are starting this year by focusing on how we recruit and retain the next generation of military leaders. Our military service academies are among the top academic institutions in the nation. West point, the Air Force Academy, the Naval Academy provide a high quality education, and they recruit and train almost 20% of our military Officers. Currently, our military academies are very selective, almost as tough to get into as the top colleges in this country. But that knife cuts both ways. Every student admitted to the military academies has other options. Academy students are often highly recruited by other schools. The competition for talent for tomorrow's leaders is already fierce. Attacks on our military academies, or policies that shrink the pool of young Americans who will consider applying for military service will cause lasting damage to our military and to our nation. The latest U.S. census found that the youngest generation of Americans is more diverse than ever. That means we need our military academies to continue developing successful leaders from all walks of life, not push away strong recruits because they feel unwelcome or undervalued. Hand fisted efforts to reshape the academies are bound to backfire. For example, a mix of military practitioners and civilian instructors have successfully worked together for decades to shape students at the service academies into a lethal fighting force. In the same way that competition for talent exists for academy students, the same competition is true for faculty. Well respected professors have options and many are aggressively recruited. When Secretary Hegseth seemed to suggest that academies should have fewer civilian professors, and when the Department of Defense imposes a ban on travel by civilian personnel, it suggests that the military does not care about civilians supporting its mission and that it will make it harder to attract and keep top talent to teach tomorrow's military leaders. The foolishness of the travel ban was immediately apparent. Testing sites for military entrance exams were forced to close or reduce hours so fewer young people could apply to the military. While DoD has begun to allow civilians to travel to these testing sites again, these attacks on civilian personnel who helped to support our military are worrying, and civilian personnel are key to keeping our academies successful as well. Our military students deserve the best teachers, people who are experts in their field, tying the hands of the academies as they compete with other top universities for talented faculty will undercut the academies and over time, undercut the leaders the academies are teaching. Students need to develop their skills both inside the classroom and outside as well. I'm sure many of us can think of sports teams and extracurricular activities that help shape our experiences at school, that help build our communities, and that made us better leaders. Surely, as a coach, chairman Tuberville saw students' leadership skills develop and grow throughout of classroom work. The executive orders attacks on clubs at academies that it

considers DEI isn't creating more effective warfighters. It's cutting off students from opportunities to grow as leaders. When we're trying to maintain a military force that can deter China, we can't afford to be shutting down engineering clubs. But under President Trump, West Point has already disbanded chapters of the National Society of Black Engineers and the National Society of Women Engineers. Both organizations have been praised repeatedly for helping recruit and retain more young engineers for military service. Closing those chapters at the military academies, while those chapters remain open at more than 600 other colleges and universities, does not help our military recruit top talent. This committee held two hearings on recruiting last year. And both hearings made clear that the United States cannot meet its recruiting goals without women. The Army met its recruiting goals in 2024 primarily because of new female recruits. There was an 18% increase in women signing up for active duty, compared to an increase of just 8% for men. Let me be clear these women are not looking for a preference or a handout. They just want a chance to compete straight up. But we won't be able to attract the women we need if they see a new glass ceiling on their opportunity to command. By removing women like the Chief of Naval Operations, Vice Admiral Franchetti, from leadership roles simply because they are women, and confirming a secretary of defense who has a long record of opposing women in combat, the Trump administration has already set a tone from the top that women are not welcome. We are already hearing concerns that women are hesitant to join certain military jobs because they believe they won't be welcome solely due to their identity, not because of their qualifications. Black recruits face their own challenges when a black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. A man who served honorably for over 40 years and who outlined our most successful strategy to deal with foreign terrorists, is fired solely because President Trump cannot imagine that he earned the job on merit. Black military recruits across the nation get the message. Your race makes you vulnerable. And when national organizations to support black college students who major in engineering are suddenly dropped at the military academies. While those organizations remain lively at 600 other colleges and universities, the message that the military academies may not welcome you gets even louder. Recruiting and retaining talent, including black and female talent, is a critical job for the future security of our nation. Pushing away more than half our future leaders is wildly self-destructive. Mr. chairman, 24 alumni from West Point and the Naval Academy have written to me sharing their stories about what the academies mean to them and why they are concerned about the direction this administration wants to take them. I would like to enter those into the record for their letters and their testimony.

SEN Warren [00:13:03] Let me read from just one of them who wrote that these attacks on diversity are “direct affront to the principles upon which our military was built and a betrayal of the sacrifices made by generations of service members.” Let those words sink in. A betrayal. We owe them better than that. I look forward to this hearing and hearing the testimony of the witnesses who are here today. I thank you for being with us. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SEN Tuberville [00:13:33] Thank you, Senator Warren. Now we'll start with our witnesses, and we'll go to questions and answers. Um, we'll start with you. Uh, General Gilland.

LTG Gilland [00:13:45] Chairman Tuberville, ranking member Warren, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for your continued support of the United States Military Academy and Corps of Cadets. I'm honored by the opportunity to share how your military academy is providing the army and our nation with disciplined, resilient, warrior leaders of character ready to fight and win on the 21st century battlefield. West point produces the best trained junior officers dedicated to the Army values and ready for a lifetime of selfless service to the nation. Starting on day one, our cadets are grounded in the ideals of duty, honor, country, and our Cadet Honor Code. Our rigorous, rigorous leader development system ensures West

Point graduates are prepared to lead American soldiers. West point is not a traditional college or university. We equip our graduates with the skills required to lead small units on the battlefield. Furthermore, we develop and refine the high moral character necessary to lead America's sons and daughters to fight and win our nation's wars through a robust core curriculum that encompasses war fighting, scholarship, and physical training underpinned by the United States Constitution. We instill both the warrior ethos and intellectual agility necessary to outthink and outmaneuver our adversaries. Our graduates serve as a testament to the effectiveness of our program, including 77 Medal of Honor recipients, over 100 Rhodes Scholars, two U.S. presidents, and numerous members of Congress, including ten current members. Our team, many of whom are combat veterans and from my personal experience, my professional experience in the 75th Ranger Regiment, as a former deputy Commander of a special mission unit, and the commander of the Warrior Division in the Republic of Korea, we know what it takes to fight and win in the most unforgiving conditions. That mindset and toughness is what West Point teaches, which is exactly the type of battlefield leader West Point produces. But will we? What truly sets us apart is our comprehensive character development efforts integrated through all aspects of the cadet experience. I believe a cadet gets a degree in character development and leadership. We charge every member of our community staff, faculty, and coaches to be developers of leadership and character. These extraordinary young men and women are among America's finest, hailing from our states, unified by shared commitment to selfless service, supporting and defending the Constitution, and living and leading honorably. We invite you to West Point to participate in the classroom and our training. Sleep outside, on the ground and in the rain with our cadets, and witness firsthand our exceptional future leaders in action. We know that you will be inspired. Thank you again, senators, for the opportunity to discuss the United States Military Academy with you today.

SEN Tuberville [00:16:49] Thank you. General. Admiral Davids.

VADM Davids [00:16:55] Chairman Tuberville. Ranking member Warren. Distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the United States Naval Academy. The Naval Academy's mission is to develop midshipmen morally, mentally, and physically, and to imbue them with the highest ideals of duty, honor, and loyalty in order to graduate leaders who are dedicated to a career of naval service. We are developing our Navy and Marine Corps next generation of resilient warfighters and ethical leaders of character who will preserve peace and, when called upon, prevail in conflict. I took command of the Naval Academy as Superintendent in January of 2024, and I am pleased to report to you today that the Naval Academy is succeeding in its mission. Having graduated from the Naval Academy in 1989 as a surface warfare officer, over the last 35 years, I've had the privilege of serving on board seven Navy ships, including command of a carrier strike group. My husband, Keith, a member of the Naval Academy class of 1990, honorably served as a Navy Seal for 34 years before retiring this fall after commanding Naval Special Warfare Command. I can attest that the Naval Academy has and continues to develop the type of stalwart leaders that our Navy and Marine Corps needs, both today and for a future fight. The Naval Academy graduates and commissions over 1000 officers each year, and ensigns and second lieutenants to serve in our Navy and Marine Corps. Every member of the Naval Academy team, from company officers to professors to coaches, is committed to developing these young men and women to meet and exceed the standards required, as evidenced by an average graduation rate of 89%, well above the DoD requirement of 75%, and the US four year graduation rate of 27%. While we value our reputation in the various college rankings, they are important for our admission efforts, it's important to highlight that we are a military service academy and not a college or a university. Our graduates must be prepared immediately upon commissioning to lead and fight as a national institution. The Naval Academy draws applicants

from across our great nation. The Naval Academy uses a comprehensive process, a whole person assessment, balancing objective factors including each candidate's application, such as GPA, with subjective factors such as strength of a candidate's high school and course load. At no time are race, sex, or ethnicity considered in the admissions process. And despite recent challenges associated with Covid 19 pandemic and drops in college enrollment nationally, the Naval Academy has experienced a nearly 47% increase in our number of applications over the past 20 years. Our outreach efforts have been successful in reaching across the country, delivering dedicated, quality candidates. From the moment a midshipman swears their oath on induction day to the day they are commissioned. They undergo experiential leadership development learning by doing as an integral aspect of their education and training. While our core academic program includes required courses in English, history and government, it also includes an immense focus on leadership development and is heavily STEM focused. Our graduates will serve on nuclear submarines, fly state of the art aircraft, and command advanced warships. This technical foundation is an imperative. Our philosophy of education stresses attention to individual students by highly qualified faculty and staff members, and our faculty as an integrated group of over 550 military officers and civilian professionals, historically designed to be roughly equal in number. Officers typically rotate to the Naval Academy for a 2 to 3 year assignments, bringing fresh ideas and experiences from the fleet. We also have a smaller contingent of permanent military instructors and professors, usually assigned for 5 to 8 years at a time. Our career civilian faculty members, all with doctoral degrees, bring continuity to the education program, the academic and subject matter expertise necessary for our advanced technical courses and hone teaching skills. Working together, our military and civilian instructors form an exceptionally dedicated team. The Naval Academy offers 26 majors. Over 75% of our graduates major in a STEM discipline, and majors are added or removed in response to the needs of the fleet. Recent examples include the addition of majors in nuclear engineering, cyber operations, and data science. We integrate wargaming into each midshipman's professional development, preparing future officers who can outthink the enemy. Every midshipman also maintains a high level of physical fitness. They participate in classes and combatives as well as swimming, and must achieve physical fitness standards that far exceed Navy wide standards. We have 36 varsity sports, among the most of any college or university in the nation. Developing teamwork, grit, resiliency and the will to win are vital attributes for all Naval Academy graduates. Established by Congress in 1845, the Naval Academy has developed into a four year total immersion program designed to instill professional, physical, and academic excellence required to develop warfighters and leaders of character for careers in our naval service. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to your questions.

SEN Tuberville [00:21:43] Thank you. Admiral. General.

LtGen Bauernfiend [00:21:46] Chairman Tuberville, Ranking member Warren and other distinguished members. Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to address this committee on behalf of the United States Air Force Academy at the Air Force Academy. We're exceptionally proud of our military, academic and athletic heritage, where we've developed leaders who've served with honor since our first graduating class of 1959. With over 30 majors and our 19 minors, we are we are proud to be named amongst the top public colleges in this great nation, alongside our teammates at this table. Additionally, our 30 intercollegiate athletic teams continue to showcase our warrior spirit and our athletic prowess. With 248 national champions after last Friday night and 928 28 All-Americans over our short history. But this is not enough. As a nation, we are in a time of consequence with global geopolitical instability. Our adversaries have watched the American way of war, and they are challenging our capabilities in every warfighting domain. It is our responsibility to act now at USAFA. That action is a

transformation that starts with our updated mission, in which we will forge leaders of character, motivated to a lifetime of service and develop to lead our Air Force and Space Force as we fight and win our nation's wars. With our mission in mind, in building upon the foundation of our services core values, our priorities are that we will forge warfighters to win. We will inspire leaders of character and quality, and we will motivate critical thinkers to adapt our mission, our priorities, and our newly injected warfighter. Training are the bedrock of forging warfighters to win the warrior ethos, our nation's needs must focus on our readiness and driving us to be offensively minded, to be the masters of our craft and team builders who overcome adversity. Our cadets will be ready for future battlefields with the foundational warfighting skills of shoot, move, communicate, mediate, and automate. These are the skills our joint force requires. Leaders of character and quality make the right decision the right way, even if unpopular. They value teamwork. Hold each other accountable. Maintain high standards and build each other up to exceed those standards and always uphold their honor. Finally, the dynamic strategic environment of our time demands critical thinkers to adapt on modern day battlefields. Our leaders must innovate solutions to wicked, hard problems while operating with limited information, by developing their skills to ensure military readiness to make rapid decisions with limited data. Manage operational risk. Our cadets will be ready to face a challenging world. As a military service academy, our priorities are the foundation of everything we do. Every military training session, every classroom, educational experience, and every athletic competition must support and reflect our priorities as we develop warfighters ready to lead on day one. Woven throughout that foundation is a shared responsibility for instilling a culture of warfighting excellence, team building, and respect to the entire team. To be clear, our training will always be demanding, but it will never be demeaning. To achieve our goals, our academy is undergoing significant change. We have returned to the basics of military training and enforcing standards for all academy personnel. While standards and accountability are critical to good order and discipline, more importantly, they are vital to modern warfare, where precision, professionalism, and trust are the foundation of complex military activities. These, we are also implementing a four class leadership development program. We are shifting away from an emphasis on stress focused training during the freshman year to a comprehensive, military focused, progressive training at the individual, team and unit levels that spans the cadet's entire 47 month leadership and military development program through four years of rigorous military training. A nationally recognized academic program and highly competitive academics, we will develop graduates who exemplify unwavering courage and integrity. They will be prepared to lead in our Air Force and our Space Force, and they will be ready to lead lethal warfighting teams to deter our adversaries and should deterrence fail. Fight and win our nation's wars. Our path is clear. We must forge warfighters to win. We must inspire leaders of character and quality, and we must motivate critical thinkers to adapt. All to ensure that we deliver the decisive advantage over our adversaries. Our nation deserves nothing less. I look forward to your questions and sharing more about the incredible Air Force Academy. Thank you.

SEN Tuberville [00:26:31] Thank you general. And we'll start with a few questions. I'd just like to say something. I coached for 40 years and recruited all over this country, and I did lose recruits to each one of your academies. And it never bothered me because I knew the direction they were headed and they were going to a different team. And all three of you said something, something about team. And that's what you are. You're your entire academy is a team. You're all together in one. You know, when you're at a university, you have academic athletic teams and all that. But you are a unique situation. I want to thank you for what you all do, because you're the tip of the spear for the future of our country, the leadership that you're going to build. So, thank you for those opening statements. And let's just talk about some of the inner workings of what y'all do. You know, in the last 30 years, the composition and the role of the faculties at each of your institutions has changed significantly. Everything changes, you know? So, I want to

ask each one of you to answer these questions. How has the military civilian mix of your faculties changed over that time? I'll start with you.

LTG Gilland [00:27:45] Senator, our civilian faculty, we call it a blended, uh, a blend of excellence. Our force structure has uniformed members, 74% of the faculty. And then the force structure allows 26% for civilian faculty. Uh, what has changed over the past decade, specifically, is that the civilian faculty bring a depth of knowledge within disciplines, uh, that we are able to use for the benefit of the education of our cadets, uh, primarily of that, uh, you know, the force structure, I said of 26% civilian, about 55% of those civilian faculty work in the STEM fields. So, as we think about our engineering, mathematics and such, uh, which has led us to be able to, uh, we've got a cadet team that has, uh, deals in hypersonics that's been able to launch a rocket, uh, that has exceeded the Karman line, or the Karman line is, uh, is 100km above the Earth's surface. These are undergraduate students that are competing against graduate students that are able to do that. Uh, we also have. And the reason they're able to do that is because when we think of the expertise, uh, that the civilian faculty within physics, aerospace engineering, etc., they bring that, uh, that expertise and that knowledge and continuity for our cadets to be able to build year after year and able to do that.

LTG Gilland [00:29:20] Also, our title ten civilian instructors. Just as our uniform instructors, they swear an oath to the Constitution to support and defend the Constitution also. Uh, and they are charged, uh, by me as a superintendent to be developers of character and leadership. They are, as I mentioned in my opening statement, Senator. Uh, they are part of that community to teach character and leadership, not just physics or data science, but also the life lessons that come with being a leader and their specific experiences.

SEN Tuberville [00:29:57] Admiral.

Speaker 5 [00:30:00] Thank you. Senator. The Naval Academy since 1845 has modeled a 50 over 50 civilian to military ratio, and we remain pretty close to that now, although we're off by a by a little bit. I'd say at the moment our civilians very similar to the answer that you just got brings such an incredible depth they bring. They tend to stay for 30 years or longer, so they bring this longevity and continuity that we need at the academy that balances the military personnel that either rotate in and out about 3 to 5 years or so, or complement our permanent military instructors and permanent military professors that will stay for a little bit longer, about 5 to 8 years in time until statutory retirement for some of them. But it's the military and the teamwork that they've got with the civilian group that really makes this robust, STEM heavy curriculum work for us. Similarly, they inspire our midshipmen. They provide that continuity. But more importantly, I think the civilians in particular provide this technical expertise that allows us to change and develop in the STEM areas that we need to for the longevity of the time and to keep up with these incredible midshipmen that are coming in and need to be more technically advanced. And so the balance that they have is really important to us. We value them working together as this incredible team. It seems to have worked very well in our case, and we're making terrific officers because of this and war fighters. And I'd say that every single one of them, if you're part of the Naval Academy, are very much a part of developing these midshipmen into the warfighters, into the leaders of character that they need to be. And thus we have this 50/50 mix.

LtGen Bauernfeind [00:31:41] You know, over time, the Air Force Academy from when I was a cadet in the early 90s was very few civilian, and we have now migrated to approximately 38 to 40% of civilian faculty, as in our cadet facing instruction, as comes forward and as I in my first seven months of I have assessed is the two most important things that we provide. Our future

leaders are two things. One is subject matter expertise to challenge them, to educate them to, but to develop those critical thinking skills but also operationally relevant experience. So, as we develop them as future warrior leaders, being able to connect with them, to teach them what it means to serve inside our military as that goes forward and we benefit from that capability from our military instructors as it moves forward, as well as a good portion of our civilian instructors, many of which are veterans themselves, before they have become civilian instructors and faculty members as that develops. Thank you.

SEN Tuberville [00:32:41] Thank you. Senator Warren.

SEN Warren [00:32:43] Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Um, I'm going to pick up on where you were. You know, we've been talking about the military academies are charged with training the next generation of leaders. And together, the three of you train about one out of every five of our military officers. The military spends millions of dollars, many, many years to train our helicopter pilots and our combat leaders. And for a few, the chiefs of Staff that we end up with. But the Trump administration is undermining those investments by tilting at windmills named DEI. In less than three months, the administration has canceled student engineering clubs and purged curricula based on clumsy keyword searches. The administration sends a strong signal that not everyone is welcome in our military. So today, I want to dig in on how you all think about your mission to develop the leaders who will keep our military strong. Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, do you consider academic and leadership potential in the admissions process so that we can develop the next generation of military officers who will take on the toughest jobs?

LtGen Bauernfeind [00:34:04] Senator Warren. Yes, we do. Absolutely. In our admissions process, consider leadership in our admissions process, and through their 47 month leadership development program.

SEN Warren [00:34:15] And yeah, make sure it's on. It's just not we're not getting much sound here. And General Dylan, same answer? Yes?

LtG Gilland: Yes, ma'am.

SEN Warren [00:34:25] And Admiral Davids.

VADM Davids [00:34:26] Yes, ma'am. Considered in the admissions process.

SEN Warren [00:34:28] Good. So, you all admit cadets and midshipmen based on their academic and their leadership potential. Then it's your job to turn that potential into reality. So, let's talk about where students develop those skills. One place, obviously, is the classroom. That's one of the reasons, as you have already described, that students learn from both academic experts and practitioners in the field. Military practitioners obviously have valuable experiences to share with students, but the academies also need the best teachers for physics and cybersecurity and electrical engineering and much, much more. The Department of Defense has recognized this, including in a 1993 report calling on the service academies to. Integrate more civilian faculty so that, quote, the faculties can act in unity, but not identically, a blend of excellence. Vice Admiral Davids does learning from both military and civilian instructors help your students develop the skills they need to become part of a lethal fighting force?

VADM Davids [00:35:38] Thank you Senator. Absolutely. They learn from both our military and our civilian. It is one team to be able to develop these midshipmen, and they are all in on doing that. So, I'm really impressed.

SEN Warren [00:35:50] Good. General Bauernfeind.

LtGen Bauernfeind [00:35:53] General Bauernfeind, ma'am.

SEN Warren [00:35:55] Bauernfeind.

LtGen Bauernfeind [00:35:56] Yes, Senator Warren. Yes. We value our faculty as it comes forward, as it brings forward for the two aspects. As mentioned before, bringing forward that subject matter expertise and that operationally relevant experience to both educate and develop future leaders.

SEN Warren [00:36:09] And General Gilland. Are you in agreement with your colleagues here?

LTG Gilland [00:36:14] Yes, Senator.

SEN Warren [00:36:14] Good. But leadership is obviously about what you learn in the classroom, but it's also what happens outside the classroom. So, I want to talk for just a minute about engineering clubs. They certainly encourage students to learn hard skills. To support each other in that undertaking can be really difficult. But an engineering club also gives a student an opportunity to take on leadership roles and responsibilities, like being the treasurer or being the president. That's true of other clubs too. One cadet who helped found the Vietnamese American Cadet Association at West Point said that it helped to make him a better officer. And that "West Point was probably the first place where I had a supportive environment for my identity and who I am." So, Lieutenant General Gilland. Do cadets grow as leaders by taking initiative and contributing to their communities and our clubs? A significant part of that.

LTG Gilland [00:37:17] Yes, Senator. All of our clubs and I would consider all of West Point as a living, breathing leadership laboratory.

SEN Warren [00:37:24] I like that. I like that. Vice Admiral Davids.

VADM Davids [00:37:28] I would agree completely.

SEN Warren [00:37:29] and general Bauernfeind.

LtGen Bauernfeind [00:37:32] Senator Warren, I do agree as well that our clubs provide opportunities.

SEN Warren [00:37:37] So I'm concerned because currently the administration is rolling out executive orders that have led to dismantling clubs that have been around for decades and that have successfully supported students at the service academies. Those leadership opportunities remain available in more than 600 colleges and universities around the country. Banning those clubs just at our military academies does not make it easier to recruit the best and the brightest. The Trump administration's ham fisted attacks on the service academies undermine our ability to recruit and to train talented young people who will become a critical part of our lethal fighting force. I think that is bad for our cadets and it is bad for our national

security. Thank you for being here and we apologize for moving in and out. We've got votes going on at the same time. So this is not a comment on what anyone has to say. We just have to play a little bit of tag here. Senator Reed I understand. Yeah. He hasn't even sat down yet. Senator Reed, you're up next.

SEN Reed [00:38:47] Well, thank you all for your testimony and for your service. And, uh, my experience, which has some connection to the academies, is that there are places which build character and also critical thinking. The character is understanding that you must do the harder right rather than the usual wrong. But the critical thinking is absolutely important because today we're in a multidimensional scheme of warfare. We have accelerated technology. We have contested supply lines. The young graduates are going into a much more complicated world than I went into with Admiral Davids. Can you talk about the process that your faculty and Dean go through when determining the curriculum for your students?

VADM Davids [00:39:34] Thank you, Senator. We have a really robust curriculum. It includes everything that you might need to make a great officer. And having just come from the fleet, I can attest to that. It's got English, it's got government, it's got leadership, it's got STEM heavy to help develop them and ready them in order to be ready to be these incredible officers out in the fleet on day one. Sir.

SEN Reed [00:39:55] Thank you. Ma'am. General Gilland, please.

LTG Gilland [00:39:58] Senator Reed, our curriculum, which spans across not only the academic program, but also our physical and military program is designed to develop critical thinkers. As I stated in the opening statement, to be able to outthink and outmaneuver our adversaries, that's built into everything that we do at the United States Military Academy.

SEN Reed [00:40:19] Thank you sir. General. Uh, Bauernfeind.

LtGen Bauernfeind [00:40:24] Senator Reed, thank you very much. We have a robust course of instruction that not only includes our academic curriculum, but our physical education and our commissioning education, all designed to meet the three priorities that I laid out in the opening statement as it moves forward. And we have a very dynamic curriculum for all, because in our connection with our Air Force major commands and our Space Force field coms, we are responsive to not only the requirements of the fielded forces, but also the direction we receive from the Secretary of the Air Force. As an example, to graduate more of our future leaders focused on STEM degrees, as the way of future warfare is going to rely heavily on that STEM education as it moves forward and through our integrated curriculum review process, as well as great faculty support, we're able to, you know, ebb and flow our curriculum to meet the dynamic requirements of the force.

SEN Reed [00:41:14] Sir, can I follow up with another question, which is, can you tell us a vignette of your own personal experience that you've tried to infuse into the wing at the Air Force Academy?

LtGen Bauernfeind [00:41:28] So, as an example, um, as we look forward to a curriculum review, we see an opportunity as looking to the future of our core is a need for understanding that all of our future leaders must not only be air minded, but they also must be space minded and cyber minded to understand how to deliver and understand the organizations that deliver those effects for the joint warfighting campaign. And so right now, our faculty are looking

through our process to how to ensure that all thousand graduates every year come out with that full appreciation of air, space and cyber to be effective as joint operators.

SEN Reed [00:42:05] Thank you, Admiral Davids, your comments.

VADM Davids [00:42:08] Thank you, Senator. I think it's my enthusiasm for the curriculum and for the trust I've got in the faculty that inspires them all to do incredible things. And you asked what we do individually to support. And so, it's a I think one of my big focus areas this year has definitely been wargaming. And it's sort of at a nascent level, but I think we do have one of the largest undergraduate wargaming efforts at one time for our midshipmen fourth class at the end of each year. It's really extraordinary. It's also to support the midshipman first class as they develop their capstone projects. And this is why it's so exciting, because it's tied completely with the fleet, with our labs, with our research projects that that occur that the midshipmen are incorporated to include in some real world operational support. And not to mention we have some incredible extracurricular activities that we talked about before. And one that I just use as an example is something we call Swat. See? But imagine it is a competitive drone group that goes out and competes against these two here, but also other schools in the real world terrain. On understanding how you use that technology in the future. It's about really infusing support to the faculty and staff.

SEN Reed [00:43:15] Thank you. And General Gilland.

LTG Gilland [00:43:17] Senator Reed, our curriculum is under continuous assessment and it evolves to meet the requirements of the United States Army as from a personal vignette perspective, at West Point, we have what's called RM 400, which is the officer capstone course. It's really it's the superintendents course. Uh, our first class or seniors, uh, take that course one semester during their senior year. I address them, uh, and specifically the underpinnings of the Constitution of the United States and what it means to be a commissioned officer in the United States Army, and then the vignettes associated with, uh, experiences that I've had through almost 35 years of service in our army.

SEN Reed [00:44:00] Just let me make two final points. One of the advantages you have now is a very established and experienced noncommissioned officer corps, who are integrated within the cadet companies and squadrons, etc., which is a plus. The second, I have some prejudices among the academies, but Admiral Davids, I think Navy really began to turn the right direction when in the 1860s you moved to Newport, Rhode Island, for a few years. So I think that's the key point that should be made. Thank you.

VADM Davids [00:44:32] Thank you sir.

SEN Tuberville [00:44:33] Thank you, Senator Reed. Senator Sullivan.

SEN Sullivan [00:44:36] Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's good to see you at the helm here. And also as a member of the US Air Force Academy Board. I think that's great. Congratulations, Senator Tuberville, on both. Um, I want to I want to just kind of have an honest assessment here, because I think one of the biggest concerns we have in the Congress, certainly the American people have, is our so-called elite universities in our country. Um, the Ivy League, for example, that they have become bastions of anti-Americanism, anti-military, uh, institutions, anti-Semitic institutions, the top universities in the country. And I think this is a charge that's not some kind of fake charge. My alma mater, Harvard University, has led the way on being anti-military for decades. They still are, in my view, in many ways. They don't respect the, um, um, uh

service of people in our military. I had an experience that I wrote about in the Wall Street Journal just last year when I visited Harvard. I mean, you couldn't believe it. A giant anti-Israel, anti-Semitic protest put on by a radical group in Harvard Library's Widener Reading Room during finals. It was ridiculous. I mean, it was stunning how out of touch these universities are. And Americans across the country are like, wait, these are the universities teaching our leaders. It's a real shame. And there's a lot of concern with good reason. So, in that Wall Street Journal, um, op ed, I talked about the experience I saw there recently at Harvard, was shocked at the lack of leadership, particularly Claudine Gay, who subsequently got fired after my Wall Street Journal op ed. And I wrote, not all university leadership is so craven, morally bankrupt, and afraid of the most vocal radical sects of their own student bodies. I serve on the Board of Visitors of the U.S. Naval Academy, which no offense, Senator Reed is rated the number one public university in America. The contrast couldn't be starker between the service academies and the Ivy League on issues like civil discourse, so-called safe spaces, trigger warnings, American history, and yes, our unique and exceptional place in the world. So, um, Admiral, I've seen a lot of what the Naval Academy has done. I think for the most part it's outstanding. But we have concerns that some of this DEI, CRT, anti-Americanism, anti-militarism kind of is going to seep over to our service academies, which I think is the point of this hearing. And I really appreciate the chairman for calling it. We want our service academies focused on warfighting lethality, uh, patriotism. And I think there's still all three of you still are at the helm of the top universities in the country. But there can be improvements and I think everybody would agree with that. So let me just ask very quickly. Um, uh, General Bauernfeild, uh, there was a civilian professor at the Air Force Academy named Doctor Lynn Chandler. Garcia published an op ed in the Washington Post where she stated, quote "she teaches critical race theories to our nation's military leaders because it is vital to cadets to understand history of racism that have shaped both foreign policy and domestic policy." Do you think CRT is vital for future military, uh, Air Force officers? General?

LtGen Bauernfeild [00:48:37] Um, Senator Sullivan, thank you. Um, what we are focused on is developing those warfighters and those leaders of character and quality and those critical thinkers to adapt in accordance with law and the 2024 NDAA. We no longer teach critical race theory at the United States Air Force Academy. But to focus on those critical thinkers, we're deep. We're delving in hard on teaching our future leaders how to think and not what to think.

SEN Sullivan [00:49:05] Good. That's a great answer. Um, Admiral, uh, you and I have gotten to know each other. Well. I appreciate your leadership on the, uh, at the Naval Academy. One of the big challenges. We just had a hearing yesterday on it. Shipbuilding. And, um, uh, do you think having our future naval officers fully understand naval architecture programs is something that should be, even though it's not a major for everybody? Is that in the core curriculum at the Naval Academy now?

VADM Davids [00:49:40] It's, uh, it's part of the core curriculum. Um, I might offer. Also, we have the second largest wave tank in the nation, which is a backup to Carter Rock, which could be helpful in the future. When we're talking shipbuilding. It's exceptionally important to us. We do have a cadre of midshipmen who really focus and enjoy naval architecture, sir. And I'm so pleased that we offer.

SEN Sullivan [00:50:00] Are there ways to encourage midshipmen? Um, more midshipmen to take up naval architecture as a major? I think it's one of our challenges on shipbuilding right now. And if there's going to be a source of military leaders who understand naval architecture to help us get us out of this challenge on shipbuilding, it's going to be from the academy you lead is there are ways to do that.

VADM Davids [00:50:22] There are ways to relook at this. We're looking at our curriculum right now just to ensure that not only do we follow the executive orders, but also that we're completely aligned with warfighting of the future, and this is warfighting the future. This is a hot button right now. It would be appropriate to reconsider what we do with the naval architecture. What I do know is we do have a lot of very wonderful midshipmen focused on it right now.

SEN Sullivan [00:50:45] Great. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SEN Tuberville [00:50:48] Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Just to follow up, general, is that professor still employed at Air Force Academy?

LtGen Bauernfeild [00:50:55] Yes, sir.

SEN Tuberville [00:50:56] Uh, Senator Reed, would you like a rebuttal? On on. Uh.

SEN Reed [00:51:02] You're very generous, Mr Chairman, but I think the history speaks for itself.

SEN Tuberville [00:51:08] Uh, Senator Hirono.

SEN Hirono [00:51:10] Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I welcome all of our superintendents. I want to be absolutely clear. The Trump administration's attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion in our military and our military service academies are not just misguided. They are dangerous. These efforts weaken our armed forces, ignore our history, and undermine the very principles that make our military the most capable in the world. The claim that DEI initiatives somehow detract from combat readiness is not only false, but flies in the face of decades of evidence. Diversity is not a distraction. It is our strategic advantage. The Department of Defense itself has repeatedly affirmed that a diverse force is a stronger force. Even the conservative Supreme Court, in its disastrous ruling on affirmative action, recognized that military academies have, quote "potentially distinct interests" in maintaining a diverse officer corps. And a federal district court recently in Maryland said just that ruling that the Naval Academy's limited use of race in admissions was constitutional, citing a compelling national security interest in officer diversity. The court emphasized that unlike civilian institutions, military academies must account for how their admissions policies directly affect national defense. And why is that? Because diversity and leadership is not an ideological preference. It is a strategic imperative because the ability to lead diverse units, work with international allies, and maintain cohesion within the ranks is not an optional skill. It is a necessity. In other words, having an officer corps that represents the country it protects and the people it leads is a force multiplier, a force multiplier which gives our armed forces an advantage over our adversaries. Yet, instead of embracing this reality, we see efforts to erase and dismantle the very programs that help us build this capability. West point has disbanded a dozen cadet clubs that supported women, LGBTQ, plus students, and racial minorities. The Air Force removed a documentary in their basic military training curriculum on the Tuskegee Airmen. Black pilots who had to fight two wars, one against the axis powers and one against the racism in their own country and the army in a so-called digital content refresh, and accidentally erased the history of the 42nd Regimental Combat Team, the most decorated unit in US military history, composed entirely of Japanese Americans who fought bravely while their families under 20,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated in internment camps back home. This is unacceptable and disrespectful to our brave veterans. I'll say that again. The Army took down a page honoring a unit that fought valiantly to prove their loyalty to a country that had imprisoned their families back at home. Reinstating the page only after public outcry. If Secretary Hegseth says message to the forces

he claims to be committed to warfighters. He claims to care about warfighting ethos and lethality. If Secretary and President Trump are proud of our warfighters, then why are they racing their legacy? This hypocrisy is not just offensive. It is a betrayal of our service members and their sacrifices. It is no coincidence that the same voices attacking DEI today are the ones who stood silent when women in the military were fighting for equal opportunities with LGBTQ plus service. Members were forced to hide who they were and when racial minorities were systematically denied leadership opportunities. This is not about merit. It is about rolling back progress under the guise of readiness and lethality. Our military academies are supposed to be developing leaders of character. You all testified to that. Leaders who can navigate the complex global challenges of the 21st century. Not just fire weapons or fly a plane. Leaders who can foster trust and cohesion with diverse units. Who can engage with international allies. And who can uphold the values of democracy and equality that we send them to defend? The Department of Defense itself has argued that diverse leadership is a, quote, national security imperative. End quote. Yet we are watching as this administration systematically dismantles every effort to ensure that our officers, our officer corps, reflect the America it serves. This is not just a political talking point. It is a strategic failure in the making. To the superintendents and leaders here today, you oversee the comprehensive training and education of our future military leaders. You are responsible for ensuring that our armed forces remain the best in the world, not just in combat effectiveness, but in leadership, character, cohesion. I urge you to stand firm. Do not allow anti DEI policies to undermine the very fabric of our national security. Do not allow President Trump and Secretary Hegseth to erase history by dividing what we know to be factually true. The strength and future of our military depends on it. Mr. chairman, I would like to include in the record of this hearing this list of words that The New York Times printed as words that are disappearing in the new Trump administration, and their words like biases, diverse groups, equal opportunity. Immigrants. Injustice. Violence. Victims. Women. Females. Blacks. Three pages worth of words that are no longer welcome in this administration. I would like this list to be included in the record of this hearing. So thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SEN Tuberville [00:57:47] Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator Scott.

SEN Scott [00:57:50] Chairman Gilland is the, um is the Army Navy game important?

LTG Gilland [00:57:58] Senator Scott, it's it's great to see you again. Um, the Army Navy game is important. Absolutely, sir.

SEN Scott [00:58:05] It would be really disappointing if you ever lost. Right?

LTG Gilland [00:58:08] We are disappointed. Um, but we will also come back.

SEN Scott [00:58:12] Did. Did you go to the game?

LTG Gilland [00:58:14] Yes, sir.

SEN Scott [00:58:14] Do you remember the score?

LTG Gilland [00:58:15] I do, sir.

SEN Scott [00:58:16] What was it?

LTG Gilland [00:58:17] It? Yeah, we. Well, I try to put that behind me, sir, but. Yes.

SEN Scott [00:58:22] Okay. But the Navy. You think it's really, really, really important game, isn't it?

VADM Davids [00:58:27] Exceptionally. Especially this year, sir.

SEN Scott [00:58:31] Oh! Go, Navy. Um, thank you guys for what you're doing. Thank each of you for what you're doing. Um. So who? So first off, who's responsible for your faculty? I mean, who's responsible for the mission? Uh, start with you general.

LtGen Bauernfeild [00:58:47] Senator Scott, I am.

SEN Scott [00:58:47] Okay.

VADM Davids [00:58:49] I'm as well, sir.

SEN Scott [00:58:50] So you're responsible for your faculty, right?

LtGen Gilland [00:58:52] Yes, Senator.

SEN Scott [00:58:53] Okay. How is your faculty chosen.

LTG Gilland [00:58:57] Senator. Our faculty at West Point has chosen, uh, through different hiring processes. As we think about, uh, those departments and department heads lead the respective hiring process. Uh, and so for both uniformed and civilian faculty, uh, going through the process to identify those people that have the skills, uh, as particularly in knowledge and experience, in whatever the discipline is that we're looking for.

SEN Scott [00:59:26] So do you do you hire them or does the faculty hire themselves? They hire new faculty.

LTG Gilland [00:59:32] Sir. Through the hiring process. The. It is brought to the Dean of the academic board and to myself for approval.

SEN Scott [00:59:41] Admiral.

VADM Davids [00:59:43] Very similar. We are looking for individuals that have the expertise in the fields that we need going forward, have the commitment to the Naval Academy and the buy in for exactly our mission set, sir.

SEN Scott [00:59:53] So who makes the final decision?

VADM Davids [00:59:55] The final. It's everything. I am responsible for. Everything. But it is recommended by. By a panel, sir.

SEN Scott [01:00:01] General.

LtGen Bauernfeild [01:00:02] Sir, we have similar processes as our colleagues at the table, and especially our Dean of faculty has, um, has great authority under my responsibility. To canvass for the best and brightest military and civilian faculty instructors as we move forward.

SEN Scott [01:00:19] So ultimately, each of you have the ability to pick your faculty.

LTG Gilland [01:00:24] Senator. Yes, we do, but I think that what is important to clarify is that our, you know, through authorities that have been delegated depending on, uh, you know, the, the instructor, the level I, I am not personally canvassing captains across the operational force to come teach in a department. Um, I have very capable department heads who execute that.

SEN Scott [01:00:54] Do any of you have tenure or are you looking at having tenure?

LtGen Bauernfeild [01:00:59] Yes, sir. We have both. Uh, we have civilian tenure for a small number of our civilian faculty, as well as our military, permanent professors and senior military faculty that have, um, longer duration at the Air Force Academy.

VADM Davids [01:01:13] We do have a process of tenure for our civilians, sir.

LTG Gilland [01:01:16] We do to also. Senator.

SEN Scott [01:01:18] So why do you have tenure?

LTG Gilland [01:01:23] Well, Senator, I think that, uh, tenure offers, uh, offers our civilian faculty specifically Opportunities to advance at within their discipline at the United States Military Academy.

VADM Davids [01:01:40] I think it's wonderful recruiting tool to get in the best and the brightest that we can. They could go to so many other places, but that we draw in these incredible talent that want to stay. Sir, I also think it's an incentive to stay, which we want these individuals to buy into the program and be able to learn and advance their skills so that we can benefit from them. Sir.

LtGen Bauernfeild [01:01:59] And, sir, I would say that's the process of the Air Force Academy, as well as part of the academic progression for our, um, civilian faculty.

SEN Scott [01:02:06] So did each of you come up through a tenure system?

LTG Gilland [01:02:12] We came up through a professional military system.

SEN Scott [01:02:14] Sir, you don't have tenure, do you?

LTG Gilland [01:02:16] No. Well, I've got 35 years in the Army, sir. I'm. I'm. Some would probably call that tenure.

SEN Scott [01:02:24] Yeah, but you had to perform. And if you didn't perform, you're out.

LTG Gilland [01:02:26] That's correct. But. But tenure within our civilian faculty, Senator, has to be earned. It's not given. It has to be demonstrated that a faculty member qualifies to meet the tenets of earning that tenure.

SEN Scott [01:02:41] Have you on any of the any of your areas? Has a tenured professor ever lost their job while you've been there?

LTG Gilland [01:02:50] Not during my time, Senator.

VADM Davids [01:02:53] Not during my time either, sir.

LtGen Bauernfeild [01:02:55] Neither for me, sir. For my short period.

SEN Scott [01:02:57] Thank you.

SEN Tuberville [01:02:59] Thank you. Just to follow up on that, can you fire civilian, tenured teacher, professor general? Can you fire one?

LTG Gilland [01:03:07] Yes, Senator.

SEN Tuberville [01:03:08] You can.

LTG Gilland [01:03:08] Yes. Through the. Yes, through the process. We have the ability to to fire them.

VADM Davids [01:03:13] Sir, there's an HR process in which we can do that.

LtGen Bauernfeild [01:03:15] Absolutely, sir. There's a process for all civilian and military personnel that don't meet our standards.

SEN Tuberville [01:03:20] Thank you.

SEN Blumenthal [01:03:22] How about your coaches.

SEN Tuberville [01:03:24] All the time? I guarantee you they don't have tenure. your.

SEN Blumenthal [01:03:30] I asked that question.

SEN Tuberville [01:03:31] We might have to work on that, though. I'm kind of partial to the coaches.

SEN Blumenthal [01:03:35] I have some serious questions. You can disregard that one. Um, I think you have, uh, some of the most important jobs in our military, maybe in our country, which is educating our future leaders. And they are leaders not only in the military, but eventually in their communities as well. Uh, and I think your job has been made more difficult by some of the recent talk about a woke military and some of the recent orders that you've had to implement, like the DEI executive orders, eliminating DEI content from your curriculum and campuses, which I think has a chilling effect on the discourse that takes place on campuses, which is really part of the educational experience. What young people say to each other, what they learned from each other, I think, is as important as maybe some of the courses that they take. And I trust that you have faithfully executed the orders from your commander in chief to eliminate all the DEI content from your campuses and curriculum. I understand in the case of West Point, sir, you reviewed over 600 courses and you eliminated just two to come into compliance, which says to me, there was not a lot of this extraneous DEI woke content in your courses. Is that a fair conclusion on my part.

LTG Gilland [01:05:19] Senator, in the review is still ongoing, given the time frame. We're actually we're in the The validation frame, but of over 600 courses that were reviewed. Two were determined to not be compliant with the executive order, and thus we eliminated those two courses. They were higher level electives that had a fairly small population of cadets that were enrolled in that. Excuse me, sir.

SEN Blumenthal [01:05:45] What were the two courses that.

LTG Gilland [01:05:47] Sir? One was a history course and the other was an English course. The respectively the. The population was impacted about 25 cadets in one course and 13 in another.

SEN Blumenthal [01:05:58] What was the title of the.

LTG Gilland [01:06:01] Oh yes, sir. The title for the history course was. It was HI463. Race, Ethnicity and Nation. And our English course, which was English 352 was Power and Difference, sir. Uh, and like I said, 25 cadets impacted in the history course. 12 cadets impacted in the English course.

SEN Blumenthal [01:06:22] Uh. Could you give me for the Navy? Admiral Davis, the equivalent information and maybe for the Air Force as well?

VADM Davids [01:06:30] Certainly, sir. Thank you for the question. Out of 870 courses that we reviewed, only two of them were canceled. They were NL 445 Gender Matters. And that's a leadership course and an English course. 8374 Gender Ssexuality Studies. We had a total of 18 other classes that we either need to modify very minorly, or make some subtle adjustments to bring it to compliance with the executive orders.

LtGen Bauernfeild [01:07:00] Senator Blumenthal, we're in the we're in the middle of our course review. So we've conducted a review of our 735, and we're doing a two sets of eyes on the review as we go forward. Of the 735, we have assessed that right now there are 55 courses that we've identified for further on analysis of those numbers. Well, right now our initial assessment is 40% will require no change. Um, 53% will require minor admin or reading change and only three of the courses potentially for suspension. I have not made that decision yet. And once I do, sir, I'll follow up on the record with the names of those courses.

SEN Blumenthal [01:07:42] All of you could follow up. I know that this review may be ongoing. As you said, general, I would appreciate knowing, you know, the reason why it's a somewhat impossible position. In order to teach about tyranny, you have to read books on Nazism, right? Some of the bad stuff has to be learned in order to avoid mistakes that have been made in the past. The military has an extraordinary and proud record of leading our nation on desegregation. It literally led the nation, and we should be teaching that history so that our military can be not only proud, but continue to lead the nation in its values and principles. Let me just say it of diversity, which is what you do. You are diverse, and you need to teach people how to deal with diverse groups that they will command and inclusion, because you want to include people from different backgrounds and races and religions and be able to lead them as well and do it equitably. So I'm very sympathetic to your to your dilemma right now. And, um, I hope that the Congress can help you rather than, than hinder you with the kind of rhetoric that has become all too popular about woke military and all that stuff. Um, I want to thank you for the great job that you are doing. I nominate every year people to go to your great institution. I wish all of them could be admitted, but I must say, one of the most satisfying and fulfilling tasks I have is to do

those nominations because they are extraordinary, just exemplary young men and women. And, uh, thank you for helping to educate them.

SEN Tuberville [01:09:45] Thank you, Senator Blumenthal. Senator Budd.

SEN Budd [01:09:50] Mr Chairman. Thank you. Thanks for hosting this. Um, thank you all for being here as well. And I would echo those comments. It's one of our highlights. Uh, it gives us great hope in our country. Um, every December, when we gather as a large panel somewhere in North Carolina to review, um, applicants and candidates, it's one of the highlights from my time in the House and also here in the Senate. Um. Let me ask about the concept of military being a great leveler, and I believe that it is so. For decades, the US military has been the strongest representation of the very best of our country. Americans from all backgrounds must continue to be evaluated and promoted based on their merit, encompassing their character, their commitment, their ability, and their courage. So, General Gilland, um, and if I could ask all of you when I ask you the questions, just to keep your answers concise. Um, you've said that all appointees to West Point are fully qualified based on your scoring methodology, the whole candidate score. So what's the lowest that an applicant can score and still be deemed highly qualified?

LTG Gilland [01:11:04] Sir, the whole candidate model, which is based on academic, physical and then character and service, uh, that is one component of the admissions process of which when we have the, we use the whole candidate score and then to measure the tangibles. And then there are the intangibles such as grit and tenacity, desire to serve our nation that are also, uh, are assessed by our recruitment officers through our admissions department. Uh, when we look at the whole person concept for the cadet candidates that exist across our nation and within your state specifically, sir. Uh, we look at both the tangibles and the intangibles.

SEN Budd [01:11:56] It would, it would seem those additional qualifiers of grit, tenacity and desire to serve. Would that not be part of the whole candidate score?

LTG Gilland [01:12:04] Well, sir, with regards to the whole candidate score, as I said, broken down there's academic which is 60%. 30%, which is the character and extracurricular Curricular activities and then 10% physical. The and then there is the assessment of the intangibles as we've seen. Through letters of evaluation that come in from coaches and and teachers respectively. The interview process, the interviews that go through our, uh, our field force members. Uh, that are out within the respective locales. Uh, and so there's these intangibles that are also considered in the development of, of a candidate and determining admissions to the military academy.

SEN Budd [01:12:50] General, is there a different minimum score for any particular demographic?

Speaker 4 [01:12:55] No, sir.

SEN Budd [01:12:58] Uh, general. Uh, roughly 25 to 30% of an incoming class at West Point is not required to be appointed based on their Order of Merit. Do you oppose legislation that would require you to appoint more applicants based on their whole candidate score? And if so, why is that, sir?

LTG Gilland [01:13:16] Our admissions model is compliant with the the title ten, the provisions of title ten, which has been codified in law, as has been stated. Sir, if there is a a change to any

legislation, we look we absolutely look forward to working with you on what that would mean and what the what it would entail with any modifications. We continuously assess our admissions process. Uh, and for instance, as we talk about the whole candidate score, uh, each of us, each of the academies have different, um, whole person scoring models. Uh, and we are looking at ours also at this time.

SEN Budd [01:14:00] General Bauernfeind, I understand you're looking at some of the Air Force Academy's admissions processes. You mentioned that earlier. Do you have any specific concerns? And if so, what are they? And would you oppose legislation that would require you to adhere to your Order of Merit in administration and admissions.

LtGen Bauernfeind [01:14:17] Um, sir, first of all, um, our admissions process to go back to the fully qualified, it requires two aspects: a highly competitive application process that goes into not only the academic ability to succeed at one of our military service academies, but extracurricular activities focused on leadership abilities and depth of service. And then, as discussed before, um, athletic capabilities and our liaison interview. But then finally, a committee score that looks in deeper into the letters of recommendation, the interviews that starts to understand alignment to our service, core values, integrity, determination, grit as that comes forward as we dig into it. Um, and so very, um, very, um, content with our current admissions process for understanding how we're getting the best and brightest. The second aspect is also the nomination that we get from our congressional leadership to ensure that we're getting the best and brightest from all the districts in our great nation as it moves forward. And if our if our elected leaders choose to provide additional guidance, we look forward to working with our elected leaders to, um, to comply with that.

SEN Budd [01:15:25] Thank you. I have additional questions for the record. Unless you have other time.

SEN Tuberville [01:15:29] Thank you. Senator Budd. I've got one question. I apologize for people in and out. We have votes. We have other hearings going on. But we do really appreciate you coming. We've learned a lot here. But I'd like, you know, permanent military faculty are Senate confirmed? Uh, should we have any input towards civilian, uh, uh, professors general? On your recommendation.

LTG Gilland [01:16:01] Sir. I think that when we look at the confirmation of our permanent faculty, which is a fairly small number, uh, you know, I would have to, you know, we make that recommendation to you as, as the, as Congress, um, with regards to our civilian faculty. Uh, I think it just even with their, uh, swearing to the oath, an oath to the Constitution of the United States, I would ask that I'd have to go back and ask about from a civilian hiring practices because civilian are, you know, the civilian hiring practices and, uh, and regulations that govern that are different than from our uniform members.

SEN Tuberville [01:16:47] Admiral.

VADM Davids [01:16:48] Very similar, except that I would say that at the Naval Academy, we have a proven formula that works, sir, and that includes these incredible civilian faculty that are charged to support, um, everything that we do. They're they're completely in, in our mission. And they complement the military, uh, aspect of our faculty as well, sir. So when I say proven, I say that 89% graduation rate at the United States Naval Academy. And a great deal of that is because of the incredible coaches, mentors, faculty and staff that we have there all focused on that mission set, sir.

SEN Tuberville [01:17:21] Thank you. General.

LtGen Bauernfeind [01:17:23] Sir. I'm very comfortable under my authorities picking the civilian faculty for our, um, force as we go forward. But if our elected leaders want to have a voice in that, I'm also very comfortable working with our elected leaders to detail a process that enables us to move through that process quickly.

SEN Tuberville[01:17:41] Senator Budd, we got time for one more question. If you want to throw it out. Thank you.

SEN Budd [01:17:46] Admiral Davids, how often does the U.S. Naval Academy deviate from the Order of Merit list when you're permitted to do so?

VADM Davids [01:17:55] Um, sir, we have an incredible system. Um, tried and true. No race, sex or ethnicity goals associated with this. No race, sex or ethnicity whatsoever governed in the the acceptance of who we actually take in. So we have congressional nominations, as you know, and the the qualified Alternate's list, which is by order of merit. And then once we have offered up the ability to, to, to provide opportunities to every district, then we can include our military nominations process as well. And then what you're talking about, sir, is the additional qualified individuals there comes to about 250 individuals or so. Those individuals are identified also by a whole person, multiple and an incredibly active and robust admissions staff of 22 members that go through both similar to them, both objective and subjective, uh, insights into each individual record. And in some cases, individuals don't score very well on an imperfect system, which is the whole person multiple. And they're able to offer up some certain individuals. And that would be in those in that particular area you're talking about. We're looking for leaders of character. We're looking for gems out there that are going to be proven that not only can they succeed at the Naval Academy, but they can. They can they have a propensity and to serve in their for their nation, for the Navy or the Marine Corps. That's what we're looking for, sir.

SEN Budd [01:19:20] Well, thank you very much. Uh, if this subcommittee reached out for data on the class of 2028, I guess matriculating 2024, would you be willing to provide that for the subcommittee?

VADM Davids [01:19:29] Certainly, sir.

SEN Budd [01:19:30] Thank you very much, chairman.

SEN Tuberville [01:19:32] Thank you, Senator Budd. Uh, I'd be remiss if I didn't bring something up about sports. And I'd like to get each one of you thoughts about this. Uh, I've always felt that playing sports was invaluable to leadership development. Many of the cadets and midshipmen at your institutions are athletes participating on the various academy sports teams. They represent the best of your institutions and our country. Occasionally and occasionally, some of these athletes develop to an elite level and are forced to forgo living out their dreams of playing the sport they love at a professional level because of outdated, to me, outdated regulations governing their service obligations. I'd like to see this year's NDAA reflect a serious commitment to these outstanding individuals when appropriate. These cadets and midshipmen should graduate and commission with their classes, and defer their service obligation until their professional sports playing careers are complete. These would be commissioned officers in our armed services, subject to the same rules and regulations as their peers, while at the same

time providing valuable exposure and increased visibility to the academics while they play sports at the highest level. I know that's not protocol for what we do as we speak, but general, I'd like to get your thoughts on that with an all volunteer military. Now we are looking for possible ways to get more and more young men and women involved in our academies.

LTG Gilland [01:21:09] Senator, the Army is a team contact sport. That's how I view the Army. And those young men and women that are coming into the army, regardless of their background and upbringing, better be prepared to get involved in a team contact sport, because that's what you all, as the citizens of our nation, ask of us. Uh, as a result, uh, when we think through, you know, the development of leaders of character, I'm looking for the I may not be the best player because numbers don't always define somebody's potential. I'm looking for the best player for the team. And for those individuals that have the the the elite capability to pursue professional sports, I absolutely support and I think that we have to look at measures, uh, as you outline from a commissioning perspective that would allow those individuals to go into the professional sport of whatever their their talent is in, execute that and then bring and then have them serve in the Army. And I think there are combinations of ways to do that through not only active service concurrent with their respective, um, playing for a team. Of course, there's there are different things that have to go with that, with moving them around and such. If they're traded or there's the deferral of the respective active duty service obligation that they have. But I think that, uh, it results in, in multiple benefits not only to each of our academies, but I think it benefits our services also through deliberate outreach and engagement that we would ask of those talented individuals.

SEN Tuberville [01:22:58] Thank you. Admiral.

VADM Davids [01:23:01] Sir. When I was a midshipman, fourth class. Napoleon McCallum was my upper class. The original Admiral, David Robinson, was also an upper class. They were heroes of mine. I saw how brilliant they did in their careers to not only bring in incredible talent to the Navy, to the Naval Academy, as well to supporting our nation. There are many ways to serve, sir, and they did brilliantly in that, so I'm a huge fan of it, I appreciate that. Uh, we may look at this. I think that the return on investment is incredible, and I fully support it, sir.

SEN Tuberville [01:23:32] Thank you. General.

LtGen Bauernfeind [01:23:34] Sir. Tuberville, I also, as a freshman, looked up to one Chad Hennings, a monster of a football player.

SEN Tuberville [01:23:41] Big old.

LtGen Bauernfeind [01:23:41] Boy. Yes, sir. Yeah. Um, and benefited greatly. He also during that time, his value was not only was he an amazing football player, but he also went out and served and flew combat operations in Desert Storm during that time, bringing both of that media value. You know, that recruiting value to bear the service and the professional capabilities. And I believe we're the NDAA is now by giving us an opportunity for three per year, is a great opportunity for us to pick those truly elite athletes that can go on to that next level. As a data point, over the last five years, we've had 20 Air Force Academy cadets or, excuse me, 22 that have moved forward into professional sports. 13 met their first seasons and unfortunately did not were not able to continue and they came back to active duty. And nine are continuing. And over that time that 2 to 3 is, I think, an opportunity for us to continue to go forward. I would also ask, sir, as we have this conversation for pro sports to have a fulsome conversation of the impact of the transfer portal on our military service academies and how that is taking young

men and women away from service to the nation until they've had an opportunity to blossom as leaders.

SEN Tuberville [01:24:54] Yeah, well, that's a great point, and I look forward to visiting with all three of you about this before our NDAA is put together this June. And I know this is a huge problem and I understand it's a huge problem for you also. So again, we'll sit down. I want to sit down with all three of you before we get to that point in June. And hopefully we can work something out, because I think it'd be a great tool for all of you for recruiting, because you all take our best and brightest and all of our all of us in here, all the senators and congressmen, we have an opportunity to send the best young men and women we possibly have in our states, and you do a great job with them. So, I want to thank you for coming today. This is a fact finding mission. We haven't done it in 30 years. We'll do it again next year and hopefully we'll make it bigger and brighter. We just want to enlighten people about what you do because leadership, discipline, teamwork is everything that goes along with what our country is about. And again, it's so, so important. We we can't really do this enough. But thank thanks again for what you do, how you do it, and tell all of your cadets and midshipmen that we're for them. And I look forward to being on the Board of Visitors at the Air Force Academy this year and visiting with you. And again, you're our future, and we hope you use our young people at your convenience, but also give them the best and brightest future they can possibly get. Because we're going to be we're going to go as a country is how they go. So, thanks again. And and, uh, this has been a good hearing and this hearing is adjourned. Thank you.