

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, D.C. 20515

May 1, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-100

The Honorable Kristi Noem  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
Department of Homeland Security  
Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., SE  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Sean Duffy  
Secretary of Transportation  
US Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretaries Hegseth, Noem, and Duffy:

We write to express our serious concerns regarding reported<sup>1</sup> plans to significantly reduce civilian faculty at our service academies as part of ongoing efforts to limit diversity in the military. If the Administration substantially reduces the number of civilian faculty, we believe that this move could force service academies to make cuts to certain majors and potentially jeopardize<sup>2</sup> their accreditation status for several degree programs. We are gravely concerned about these potential reductions in force and efforts to eliminate diversity, and fail to see how these actions strengthen our national security. We believe that service academies benefit from drawing talented individuals from across America, not only those from certain racial groups, zip codes, or gender, ensuring that the best qualified candidates have equal opportunity to serve.

Our service academies have a bright and storied place in U.S. history, and play a vital role in shaping future military leaders who embody the values of discipline, integrity, and service to our nation. As Members of Congress, we have the distinct honor of interviewing and recommending our constituents to join these service academies and take their first step into public service. That is why we were particularly concerned that following the January 27th, 2025, Executive Order titled "Restoring America's Fighting Force," the Administration began implementing various changes across military educational institutions. For example, Department of Defense Secretary

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Shinn, *Proposed Civilian Faculty Cuts at Air Force Academy Raise Alarms Over Critical Engineering Programs*, GAZETTE (Apr 11, 2025), [https://gazette.com/military/air-force-academy-faces-concern-about-future-of-critical-programs/article\\_c577aa52-7873-4dfe-b2ba-359c54892af4.html#:~:text=The%20superintendent%20said%20in%20his,part%20of%20the%20school's%20mission.](https://gazette.com/military/air-force-academy-faces-concern-about-future-of-critical-programs/article_c577aa52-7873-4dfe-b2ba-359c54892af4.html#:~:text=The%20superintendent%20said%20in%20his,part%20of%20the%20school's%20mission.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Pete Hegseth publicly stated<sup>3</sup> that he aims to substantially cut civilian faculty positions at the service academies because he believes they expose students to dangerously diverse ideas, replacing these educators with military personnel despite ongoing recruiting challenges.<sup>4</sup> We reject the notion that limiting exposure to multiple viewpoints somehow protects servicemembers.

To be clear, we are greatly disturbed with the steps already taken to stifle freedom of thought. For example, it is deeply concerning that the U.S. Naval Academy has removed hundreds of books from their libraries at the direction of Naval leadership, including important works discussing our nation's complex history, while leaving in place books that are celebrated by organizations that believe the white race is superior to all others.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, we understand that several service academies have altered or suspended certain courses<sup>6</sup> that previously exposed students to a wide range of perspectives and experiences relevant to military leadership in a global context. Further, some academies have even disbanded heritage clubs<sup>7</sup> to comply with the Executive Order. These educational resources provide valuable insights that help develop officers capable of leading diverse units and understanding complex geopolitical environments.

We are appalled that Secretary Hegseth seems to think only those Americans with certain backgrounds, not the full diversity of America, should be teachers or students at the military academies. The civilian faculty at our service academies—with all their diverse viewpoints and backgrounds<sup>8</sup>—are essential to preparing officers who can think critically and lead effectively in complex, rapidly changing environments. They bring specialized knowledge from their respective fields and often represent institutional memory that transcends typical military rotation cycles. Additionally, civilian instructors frequently maintain active connections with civilian universities and research institutions, facilitating important collaborative relationships that benefit students.

Gutting civilian faculty can harm educational quality, stretch military instructors even thinner, damage research partnerships, and limit the critical thinking skills that save lives when plans fall apart in the field. Given these concerns, we request that you promptly answer the following questions in 14 days time:

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<sup>3</sup> Lexi Lonas Cochran, *Hegseth's Goal for Fewer Civilian Professors at Military Academies Faces Roadblocks*, THE HILL (Feb 3, 2025), <https://thehill.com/homenews/education/5119424-hegseth-woke-professors-military-academies/>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Roth, *Naval Academy Bans Books*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, April 11, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/11/us/politics/naval-academy-banned-books.html>

<sup>6</sup> Svetlana Shkolnikova, *Military Academies Cancel Handful of Classes to Comply with Trump's DEI Purge*, STARS AND STRIPES (Mar 26, 2025), <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2025-03-26/military-academies-trump-dei-purge-17270021.html>

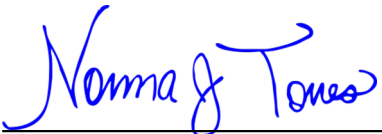
<sup>7</sup> Tobi Raji, *Air Force Reverses Ban on Pronouns That Ran Afoul of Federal Law*, STARS AND STRIPES (Apr 9, 2025), <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2025-04-09/air-force-pronoun-ban-17424308.html>

<sup>8</sup> Lexi Lonas Cochran, *Hegseth's Goal for Fewer Civilian Professors at Military Academies Faces Roadblocks*, THE HILL (Feb 3, 2025), <https://thehill.com/homenews/education/5119424-hegseth-woke-professors-military-academies/>

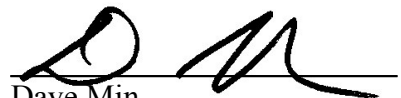
1. Do your respective academies or war colleges currently have plans to reduce civilian faculty positions? If so, what is the scale and timeline of these reductions, and by what metrics are you justifying these cuts?
2. Have you conducted any impact assessments regarding how such reductions would affect academic quality, accreditation, and cadet/midshipman educational outcomes? If so, we request that you share those impact assessments with us.
3. What processes are in place to ensure that any staffing changes maintain the high academic standards that distinguish our service academies and war colleges?
4. If these service academies or war colleges cut civilian faculty, how will they address potential disruptions in daily operations and administration?
5. How will you ensure continued academic freedom and a wide range of viewpoints if civilian faculty numbers are reduced?
6. What assurances can you provide that critical programs at the Academies will continue to receive adequate funding and support?
7. Does the Department of Defense have a long-term strategy to address faculty shortfalls that does not involve taking military officers away from important posts and combat roles?

We urge you to carefully consider the long-term impacts that significant reductions in civilian faculty would have on the quality of education and the development of future military leaders. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters further and to work collaboratively to ensure that our service academies continue to produce officers of the highest caliber. Thank you for your attention to these concerns and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



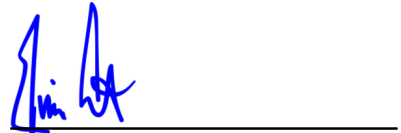
Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress



Dave Min  
Member of Congress



André Carson  
Member of Congress



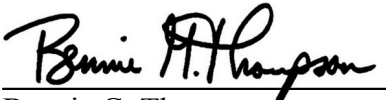
Jim Costa  
Member of Congress



Marc A. Veasey  
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Paul D. Tonko  
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Bennie G. Thompson  
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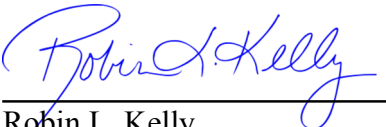
Suhas Subramanyam  
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress



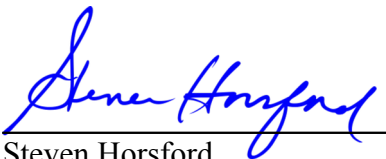
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Steven Horsford  
Member of Congress



Robert Garcia  
Member of Congress

Cc: **United States Military Academy**, Lt. General Steven W. Gilland  
**United States Naval Academy**, Vice Admiral Yvette M. Davids  
**United States Air Force Academy**, Lt. General Tony D. Bauernfeind  
**United States Coast Guard Academy**, Rear Admiral Michael J. Johnston  
**United States Merchant Marine Academy**, Vice Admiral Joanna M. Nunan  
**United States Naval War College**, Rear Admiral Darryl L. Walker  
**United States Army War College**, Major General David C. Hill  
**United States Air University**, Lt. General Andrea D. Tullos  
**United States National Defense University**, Vice Admiral Peter A. Garvin  
**United States Marine Corps War College**, Brigadier General Matthew Tracy