

Congressman Chris Gibson

**Testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Defense:**

End Strength Priorities for the FY2017 Defense Appropriations

Good morning Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Visclosky, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the work you do to preserve the security of our great nation and for allowing me to testify before the subcommittee regarding a priority of mine and 27 other bipartisan members of Congress, including 7 Democrats and 20 Republicans, primarily on the House Armed Services Committee.

This initiative is embodied in my bill, *H.R. 4534, the Protecting Our Security Through Utilizing Right-Sized End-Strength Act of 2016*, or the “POSTURE Act.” This legislation is simple: it stops the drawdown of the end strength levels for the Land Forces of the United States. We began decreasing the size of our Army, Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Marine Corps, and Marine Corps Reserve to coincide with the drawdown of combat forces in Iraq and accelerated it with the drawdown in Afghanistan. This decrease was primarily based on risk assessments established in a different world, a world before ISIS and a resurgent Russia, before an increasingly belligerent and unpredictable North Korea, before an expansionist China, and a world before a refinanced Iran. Simply put, the risks faced by the United States and our partners and allies across the globe are greater than at any time in recent history.

And yet, we are currently on the glidepath to the smallest Land Force size since pre-World War II. We cannot continue this dangerous erosion of our principle conventional deterrent against our enemies and tool of assurance to our allies and partners. Should we continue this drawdown, and should we find ourselves engaged in a major engagement, we will

have to fully commit our entire force and have no dwell time to provide respite to our service men and women and their families. Furthermore, the next President will have to use his or her entire first term simply rebuilding what we have lost.

We cannot continue this misguided policy that was established in a less-risky world. While I am not submitting this legislation or components of it as an initiative to the House Appropriations Committee as a Member initiative, I felt the need to engage you all on it and ask that you closely coordinate with the House Armed Services Committee to ensure not only that the drawdown is stopped, but that our personnel are adequately funded in order to guarantee a robust, ready, equipped, and well-trained force rather than an underfunded, hollow force. It is my understanding that the cost of the POSTURE Act compared to current law will be approximately \$600 million in FY17. I ask that this Subcommittee and the Full Appropriations Committee work closely with HASC and the Budget Committee to properly fund the entire DOD Budget and our national security apparatus.