

**OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN HOWARD P. "BUCK" MCKEON
COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION MEETING FOR THE 113TH CONGRESS
TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2013**

Washington - House Armed Services Committee Chairman Howard P. "Buck" McKeon made the following remarks as prepared for delivery at the start of the Organizational Meeting for the 113th Congress:

"Let me first welcome all members – returning and new – to the House Armed Services Committee. We have a full schedule today, so I will only make brief comments at this point.

"First, I want to reiterate the pledge I made when I was named Chairman – to continue this committee's longstanding bipartisan tradition in the furtherance of a strong national defense. We will certainly have areas of disagreement, but the security challenges facing our nation require that we find solutions and not merely prolong political debate.

"Second, our armed services are being tested in the field on a daily basis. They are completing their mission, we must as well. Our mission is enshrined in the constitution. We are charged with providing for the common defense. And as the plaque in front of this rostrum reminds us, Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution further affirms, 'The Congress shall have the Power to ... raise and support Armies ... to provide and maintain a Navy ... to make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces.' This is a heavy responsibility – it is particularly weighty in a time of war and fiscal austerity. Nevertheless, it is the job of this committee to ensure that our men and women in uniform are properly trained, resourced, equipped and supported so that they can fulfill not just today's missions, but future missions, and return safely to their families and loved ones.

"Lastly, I know it will come as no surprise to most of you, but the committee will become very busy in the weeks and months ahead. Although there is significant uncertainty regarding many issues facing the committee, not the least of which is the threat of defense sequestration, the one thing our troops and their families have been able to rely on – for the last 51 years - is that Congress will deliver a defense authorization bill. It is with that in mind that I remain committed to moving forward with a strong National Defense Authorization bill and to provide the oversight that the nation demands of us. I will be informed by your views, too, and will both encourage and expect your participation. We have a lot to do and I welcome any and all member ideas and participation in the many issues we need to cover.

"Before I turn to Ranking Member Smith for his thoughts and before we introduce our new slate of members, I want to take a moment to note that last week America lost a selfless servant and true hero. Doug Roach was more than a member of the HASC staff, he was an institution. We are deeply saddened by his loss. Each of us had come to rely on Doug's counsel and guidance on a variety of issues and he always gave it to us straight, without regard to politics or parochial interests. He was trusted and admired by Republicans and Democrats alike. He was a man of noble virtue, a tough fighter pilot who was also known for his acts of kindness. Doug committed every waking moment to service to his country, first in

the United States Air Force and later to this Committee, where he has served since 1991. He was a selfless man who worked to the very end. We will all have an opportunity next Tuesday evening to say our farewells to Doug and share our memories as a group. More information on that will follow. But for now, I ask that you join me in a moment of silence in memory of Doug.

"At this time let me introduce the very large and impressive team joining us. Their backgrounds will benefit our committee, the military services, and most importantly, the men and women of our Armed Forces and their families.

"First, I would like to welcome back Rob Bishop from the first district of Utah, who has been a trusted friend and leader on HASC issues. Rob's district includes Hill Air Force base and key defense employers. Rob was on a leave of absence from the committee last Congress to serve on Rules. Although we'll miss his support from the Rules Committee during the consideration of the NDAA, we'd rather have him back home with us. Welcome back.

"Our first new HASC member is Rich Nugent representing the 11th district of Florida. Prior to his first term in the House last Congress, Rich was Sheriff of Hernando County, Florida. Rich has three sons in the Army who have served combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. The committee will benefit from his expertise as both a former member of the Air National Guard and a military parent.

"From the great state of South Dakota, we welcome Kristi Noem. She is the At-Large Representative for the Mount Rushmore State. Kristi's state is home to Ellsworth Air Force Base and several other military installations. She is a farmer, rancher and small business owner and served in the South Dakota House of Representatives.

"From the 8th district of California, we welcome Paul Cook. Paul's district includes several military installations that I know very well: Fort Irwin, 29 Palms, the Marine Corps Logistics Base at Barstow, the Marine Mountain Warfare Center and others. Paul served in the U.S. Marine Corps for 26 years. He is an infantry officer and the winner of the Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts.

"From the first district of Oklahoma, we welcome Jim Bridenstine. Jim's district is based in Tulsa. Jim is a Lieutenant Commander in the U.S. Navy. He served nearly 10 years active duty service and is still a reservist. He is a Naval aviator who flew E-2C Hawkeyes in Central and South America as part of drug interdiction missions. We look forward to Jim bringing his experience to the Committee.

"From the 2nd District of Ohio, Brad Wenstrup. Brad has served in the U.S. Army Reserves Medical Corps. He is a Lieutenant Colonel and served one year of active duty in Iraq as a Combat Surgeon. We are looking forward to having his perspective on the HASC.

"Finally, I would like to introduce Jackie Walorski from the second district of Indiana, based in South Bend. Jackie's district is home to Grissom Air Force Base and several industry

partners who help to sustain our troops, including the production of equipment like the Hum-Vee. Jackie served three terms in the Indiana General Assembly before joining the House. We welcome Jackie.

“We are fortunate to have such a talented group join our team here at the Committee. I now recognize Mr. Smith to introduce our new slate of members from his side of the aisle.”