

House Republicans hammer defense officials on 'woke' DEI initiatives

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The House Military Personnel Subcommittee held a hearing on Thursday focusing on the Department of Defense's diversity and inclusion efforts, with Republicans asking pointed questions about whether they advanced military objectives.

Republicans on the committee eagerly peppered Gil Cisneros, the undersecretary for personnel and readiness; Agnes Schaefer, the assistant secretary for manpower and reserve affairs; Franklin Parker, the assistant secretary of the Navy for manpower and reserve affairs; and Alex Wagner, the assistant secretary of the Air Force for manpower and reserve affairs with questions about the department's emphasis on identity and race.

DOD COMPTROLLER SAYS SPENDING CUTS WOULD AFFECT PACIFIC DETERRENCE AND NUCLEAR TRIAD

Rep. Jim Banks (R-IN), the committee chairman, set the tenor for the hearing, arguing in his opening remarks, "We are now in danger of losing those meritocratic principles to the politicization of our armed forces. ... Thanks first and foremost to the ever-expanding bureaucracy of diversity, equity, and inclusion policies, regulations, and trainings."

One main topic that Republicans focused on was the tweets of Kelisa Wing, the former diversity, equity, and inclusion chief of the department's Education Activity, who was moved out of that position following an investigation into her social media posts that denigrated white people.

"This lady actually had the CAUdacity to say that black people can be racist too... I had to stop the session and give Karen the BUSINESS... We are not the majority, we don't have power," Wing wrote in a post that Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY) had put on a poster that she had ready to display as she questioned Cisneros.

Cisneros ultimately acknowledged, "I do agree that that is not acceptable. It's not condoned by it's not something I would condone, and it's not condoned by ... the Department of Defense," though he still faced questions from Republicans on Wing.

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At one point, he declined to share his personal belief with Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL) as to whether he believed black people could be racist, in reference to Wing's tweet, during a contentious point in the hearing.

Both the military representatives and Democrats on the committee praised the department's emphasis on inclusion but stressed there was still work to be done as many senior DOD officials are white and male. The divide on the emphasis of diversity and inclusion in the military is largely defined by Democrats and Republicans, the former believing it's not only essential but a strength to the force, whereas the latter believe it's a detriment contributing to the recruitment woes facing the military.