

I want to start by thanking Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and the Members of this Committee for having us here today. You have difficult decisions before you and I don't envy your positions.

I am here today with Ranking Member Smith, my partner at the Armed Services Committee. We take the expenditure of taxpayer dollars seriously and will always ensure the budget allotted to our Committee will be spent judiciously and prudently. Every taxpayer dollar entrusted to us will be used to advance our nation's national security policies. As I am sure all of you are aware, our Committee has consistently produced for the American people and our warfighters. We do this by focusing on our work and our budget request reflects this task.

The committees of this House are the engines that drive the legislative agenda of this body. From the first spark of an idea to passage off the House floor, Committees constantly are moving forward with legislation for the Members to consider, debate, and ultimately vote on.

At the Armed Services Committee, this is very much the case. Our Committee authorizes and oversees more than half of all discretionary spending, and we do it every year. That is a lot to ask of the Members and staff. Resourcing our Committee to reflect this reality shouldn't be controversial.

The American people expect that we don't waste their tax dollars on unnecessary programs and platforms. For 62 straight years, our Committee has examined every dollar going to the DOD through the National Defense Authorization Act. The NDAA implements the rigorous oversight our members to conduct and ensures the Department of Defense is following Congressional intent. No other Committee can say that the department and agencies they oversee get a thorough review every single year.

The Members of our Committee take their role of authorizing and overseeing the Department of Defense with the seriousness it requires. Every day, our Members are engaged with the DOD, with Members off our Committee, with our warfighters, with industry, and with thought leaders. It is quite impressive to see that level of engagement.

That doesn't mean it's an easy task for our Members or staff to draft the NDAA. The complexity of national security issues gets more challenging every year. The programs and platforms we authorize get more detailed and more complex with the advancement of technology. Tracking these programs takes years and years of oversight and requires technical knowledge. Our Members and staff work for years to ensure that the taxpayer dollars aren't being wasted on programs that are failing or don't meet our national security interests.

And it's not just that these programs are getting more complex. It's also that the Members of this House are engaging in the NDAA process at historic levels. The FY2020 NDAA contained just over 1,000 Member provisions and saw nearly 1,200 amendments filed over the course of the committee markup and floor consideration. Last year those numbers increased significantly. The FY2023 NDAA contained more than 1,500 Member provisions and saw more than 2,100 amendments filed and considered.

While the Members of HASC are engaged daily on the issues before our Committee, the majority of the work on Member provisions and amendments falls on staff. It's not easy work which is why we need talented individuals to complement the work of the Members.

In some ways, we are lucky. Our Committee attracts individuals predisposed to serve their country. On staff we employ fighter pilots, career military servicemembers, PhDs, and others with long careers in service to America. These staff work hard for the Members and we are proud of the work they do. Which is why we need to do everything we can as Members to retain them.

Keeping and recruiting talent is getting more difficult every year. We often lose good staff to the private sector and, worse than that, the Executive Branch. Being able to pay staff what they are worth is important to us. Having the right number of staff to meet the workload is just as vital. Too often, we overwork staff because we don't have enough to meet the needs of the Members. Our ask for additional staff comes because we want to ensure that the oversight and legislating required of us is completed at the level the Members expect. I will add that we have not had a staff increase at HASC since 2009.

Thank you for your consideration of our budget request. I yield back my time.