

Prepared Remarks for the Committee on House Administration's Hearing on Committee  
Funding for the 118th Congress

Congressman Adam Smith  
Ranking Member, House Armed Services Committee

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Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, Members of the Committee, it's my pleasure to testify today alongside my friend and partner on the House Armed Services Committee, Chairman Mike Rogers.

The House Armed Services Committee (HASC) has a long bipartisan tradition for conducting year-round oversight of the Department of Defense and developing the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). For 62 consecutive years, the NDAA has been enacted into law. Each version of the NDAA has reflected priorities of members on both sides of the aisle and ensured that our warfighters have the equipment, resources, authorities, and training to conduct their missions and support our national security. The way the committee is funded, organized, and operates is the foundation that this 62-year bipartisan tradition has been built and that is why I would ask for your support of our committee's funding request.

Our funding request submitted to the Committee on House Administration contains detailed justifications that cover subscriptions, equipment, software, and other spending categories that support HASC's day-to-day operations. But I want to take this time to focus on the line item that makes up the bulk of our funding request, and that is compensation for the committee's staff.

The HASC administrative and professional staff are critical to the committee's work. We take our oversight role seriously and seek to maintain a staff that brings a depth of knowledge and experience. These individuals work tirelessly to support the committee's oversight work, development of the NDAA, and provide subject matter expertise and advice to our members. On paper, the minority is allocated 15 staff positions, the majority controls the remaining 56 staff positions, though a number of those are non-partisan positions that provide equal support to the majority and minority staff. In practice, our committee's staff are often interchangeable and provide information and recommendations to members on both sides of the aisle regardless of whether they are technically listed as a majority or minority staffer. Without adequate funding, the committee may struggle to recruit and retain these subject matter experts which could diminish the value of the work we do at HASC.

It is also worth pointing out that the size of the NDAA as well as volume of member requests submitted for consideration in the NDAA have both grown exponentially in recent years. The FY2020 NDAA contained just over 1,000 provisions and saw nearly 1,200 amendments filed over the course of the committee markup and floor consideration of the bill. By comparison, the final FY2023 NDAA contained more than 1,500 provisions and saw more than 2,100 amendments filed and considered. The issues the committee oversees are complex and the added

legislative work requires countless hours from Members and staff to review, redraft, and provide recommendations to colleagues. And while this oversight and legislative workload has increased, the size of the committee staff has not grown since 2009. As part of our request, we are seeking 10 additional staff spots with corresponding funding for salaries and technology.

We all know that finding and retaining the right staff is key to the work we do in the House. At a committee like HASC, staff that can provide a deep understanding of the complex authorities and programs run by the DOD, as well as obtain and maintain necessary security clearances, and are usually well into their careers. Thus, we are constantly recruiting from the military, executive branch agencies, industry, and academia. Many are well accomplished in their fields. From fighter pilots to PhDs, we employ a varying and diverse skill set to execute for our members. These professional staff are highly sought after by the Executive Branch and the private sector which is why offering competitive salaries is necessary to attract and retain this talented workforce. But our staff are overworked, and we have struggled to compete with compensation offered by the Executive Branch and private sector. The HASC budget request will enable the committee to compete for and retain talented staff, while also ensuring the staff is properly sized to support the oversight and legislative expectations of the House.

HASC has been good stewards of the taxpayer dollars made available to committee and we plan on continuing that with any new funding you provide to us. We understand the funding for House Committees is finite, but we encourage the Committee on House Administration to allow the House to punch above its weight by fully funding the committees. We appreciate your time and consideration of our request and look forward to answering any questions you may have.