

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 2, 2026

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

We write regarding your recent announcement directing the military departments to terminate the practice of appointing civilian faculty to tenured positions at the United States military service academies. We recognize the Department's responsibility to ensure that the academies provide rigorous military education and effectively prepare future officers to lead our Armed Forces. However, given the significant change this policy represents to the employment structure and academic governance of these institutions, we request additional information regarding the Department's legal authority for this action, its intended application, and effects on existing faculty.

Congress has long recognized that the service academies have a dual mission: preparing cadets and midshipmen for military service while providing a rigorous academic education. Civilian faculty play an important role in making that possible. Federal law specifically authorizes the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force to employ civilian professors, instructors, and lecturers at the United States Military Academy, the United States Naval Academy, and the United States Air Force Academy. Federal law similarly authorizes civilian faculty at the United States Coast Guard Academy. Moreover, the academies have maintained civilian tenure systems for decades.

Given this statutory and institutional history, we are concerned about the legal basis for the Department's new policy and whether the directive is intended to prohibit future grants of tenure or to alter the status and employment protections of faculty who are currently tenured.

Accordingly, please provide answers to the following questions:

1. What specific statutory authority does the Department rely upon to eliminate the practice of granting tenure to civilian faculty at the service academies?
2. Were the Service Secretaries or the superintendents of the military service academies consulted in the development of this new policy? What entities, individuals, or organizations were consulted?
3. Does the directive apply only to future appointments and future grants of tenure, or does it purport to revoke, terminate, or otherwise alter the tenure status of civilian faculty who

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are currently tenured? If the latter, please identify the statutory authority permitting such action.

4. What specific personnel actions will be taken as a result of the directive? Please provide the anticipated number of civilian faculty positions affected at each service academy, including the number of currently tenured faculty, tenure-track faculty, and faculty who will no longer be eligible for tenure.
5. What assessment was conducted regarding the potential effect of eliminating tenure on academic freedom, faculty recruitment and retention, accreditation, and the academic quality of the service academies? Please provide copies of any analyses, studies, or communications concerning these issues.
6. The service academy superintendents previously testified¹ before Congress that tenure is an important tool for recruiting and retaining highly qualified civilian faculty. What analysis did the Department conduct regarding whether eliminating tenure will affect the academies' ability to recruit and retain faculty with advanced academic credentials and specialized expertise?

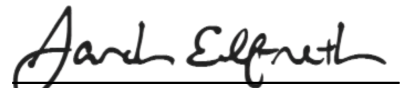
We support rigorous oversight of military education and agree that our service academies must prepare future officers to meet the demands of modern warfare. At the same time, changes to the employment structure and academic governance of federally established institutions should be grounded in clear statutory authority and implemented consistently with congressional direction.

Please provide the requested information and documents no later than October 16th. We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter and look forward to working with the Department to ensure that the service academies continue to provide our future military leaders with the rigorous military and academic education necessary to defend the United States.

Sincerely,



Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress



Sarah Elfresth
Member of Congress

¹ [To conduct oversight and receive testimo... | U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services](#)

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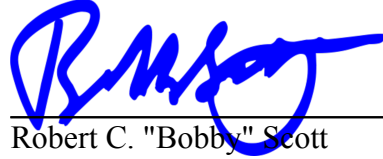
Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Patrick Ryan
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Ranking Member
House Committee on
Education and Workforce



Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress