

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 27, 2026

The Honorable Anthony Tata
Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and
Readiness
Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Undersecretary Tata,

We write to request additional information regarding your May 28, 2026 memorandum, “Development of the Joint Warfighting Evaluation (JWE) Metric,” which would implement Secretary Hegseth’s May 20, 2026 memorandum directing that “joint warfighting ability” be the focus of promotion criteria for officers and noncommissioned officers.

It has been reported that the screening process is set to begin with the O-6 promotions, which is the last rank in the field-grade officer ladder, and O-7 promotions, the start of the flag officer ranks that includes generals and admirals [1]. As the Department of Defense moves to change the standards by which our senior military leaders are evaluated for promotion, we are writing to obtain clarity on how the evaluation will be designed and implemented within the Department.

Your memorandum established an Operational Planning Team (OPT), overseen by a committee, to develop the JWE. We are concerned that the memorandum appoints a separated O-5 to chair a committee tasked with creating a promotion evaluation that exceeds their own retired rank.

In the last year, the Secretary of Defense has removed or blocked 22 prospective one-stars from promotion [2], seemingly at random and with no explanation to Congress or the public. Given the significance of changing a longstanding promotion process, beginning with those up for promotion to flag officers across multiple military branches, and the Department’s obligation to maintain a fair, transparent, and merit-based promotion process, we request a response to the below questions and requests for information no later than August 15, 2026:

1. Provide the list of individuals nominated or appointed to the Operational Planning Team that is responsible for developing the JWE.
2. Your memorandum sets a 60-day deadline for the OPT to deliver a range of options, recommendations, and resource requirements. Please provide the Department’s process and expected timeline for finalizing the JWE.
3. Does the Department plan to submit the OPT recommendations and brief Congress on the JWE before a final decision is made?
4. Will the interim system continue to rely on existing service-run performance evaluation and selection-board processes?

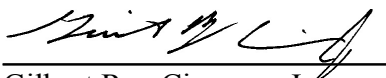
[1] <https://taskandpurpose.com/news/flag-officers-joint-warfighting/>

[2] https://www.nytimes.com/2026/06/01/us/politics/hegseth-navy-promotion-list.html?eafs_enabled=false

5. What statutory or regulatory authority permits a civilian advisor, whose highest military grade was O-6, to chair a committee whose recommendations will directly inform the criteria by which officers are screened for promotion to grades O-6 through O-10?
6. Does the Department plan to request statutory changes from Congress regarding the promotion selection process established under 10 U.S.C. Chapter 36?
7. What role will active duty general and flag officers, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and/or the Service Chiefs have in approving or rejecting the JWE criteria recommended by the OPT before those criteria are applied to senior leader promotion screenings?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this critical process shaping the future of our military's leadership. We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



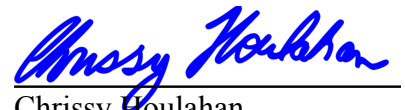
Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress



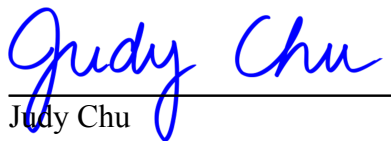
Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



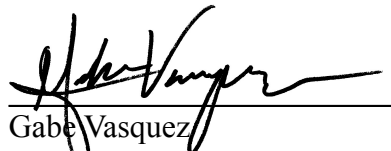
Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress



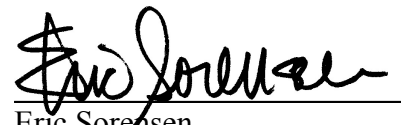
Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Shri Thanedar
Member of Congress



Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress



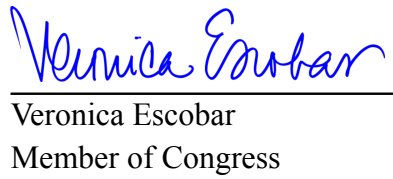
Eric Sorensen
Member of Congress



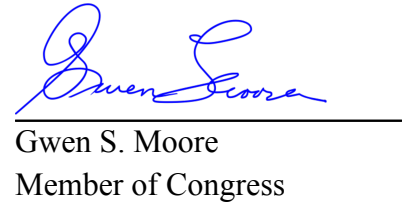
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



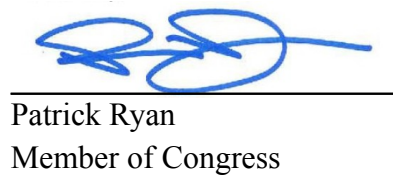
Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress



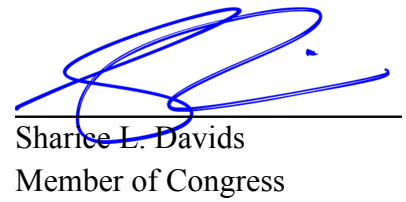
Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



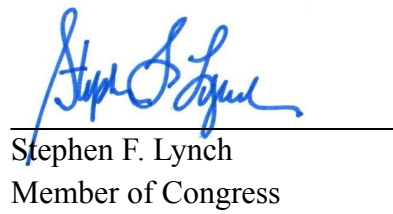
Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Patrick Ryan
Member of Congress



Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress