

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 22, 2023

The Honorable Christine Wormuth  
Secretary of the Army  
U.S. Department of Defense  
101 Army Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20310

Dear Secretary Wormuth:

The U.S. Army is in the midst of a historic recruiting crisis. In FY22, the Army fell 15,000 soldiers, or 25 percent, short of its 60,000-person recruitment goal. The Army predicts FY23 will be worse, estimating its end strength will have a further shortfall of 20,000 soldiers. In anticipation of another poor recruiting year, the Army asked for their end strength to be cut by 33,000 active-duty soldiers from FY22 to FY23.

In light of this crisis, we write to you in response to reporting that states the Army conducted surveys of approximately 2,400 respondents aged 16 to 28 over a span of 4 months last spring and summer to discern why it is failing to meet its recruiting goals. Notably, the Army declined to publicly release the survey's entire data set and methodology, choosing instead to discuss its "general findings" with the Associated Press, which published an unverified, secondhand description of the survey's findings.<sup>1</sup>

Based on this unreleased data, the Army's head of marketing, Major General Alex Fink, determined that young Americans "just don't see the Army as something that's relevant, they see us as revered, but not relevant, in their lives." General Fink went on to say that "woke" DOD policies were cited as an issue by between 4 and 5 percent of respondents nationwide, and that very few respondents say they are deterred from enlisting due to "woke" DOD policies and concerns about discrimination against women and minorities were seen as a bigger issue.

This purported data stands in stark contrast to publicly available polling data on military recruiting:

- A November 2022 poll conducted by the Ronald Reagan Institute found a sharp decline in the trust and confidence in the U.S. military, with 70 percent saying they had "a great deal" of trust in 2018, dropping to 48 percent in 2022. The most frequently cited reason for decreased trust was the "military becoming overly politicized." Also found at the top of the list was "the performance and competence of presidents as the Commander in Chief, and "so-called 'woke' practices undermining military effectiveness."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-politics-military-and-defense-race-ethnicity-6548adcb0fee590f3427771d1e1eeea7?utm\\_source=homepage&utm\\_medium=TopNews&utm\\_campaign=position\\_07](https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-politics-military-and-defense-race-ethnicity-6548adcb0fee590f3427771d1e1eeea7?utm_source=homepage&utm_medium=TopNews&utm_campaign=position_07)

<sup>2</sup> Beacon Research, "US National Survey Of Defense Attitudes On Behalf of the Ronald Reagan Foundation – Final Topline Results," *Ronald Reagan Foundation*, November 9-17, 2022, <https://www.reaganfoundation.org/media/359964/rndf-survey-2022-topline.pdf> (accessed February 6, 2023).

- A recent poll conducted by the Heritage Foundation<sup>3</sup> found that 68 percent of active-duty military surveyed said they witnessed politicization in the military, and 65 percent of active duty are concerned with growing politicization of the military. The most selected areas of concern were “an overemphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion programs; requirement for the military to pay for abortion related travel; reduction of fitness standards to promote equity.”

Further, the Heritage Foundation poll found that 68 percent of active-duty military personnel stated politicization of the military would impact their decision to encourage their children to join. This is particularly concerning, given the role that military families play in recruiting.

As the Chairmen of the House Armed Services Committee’s Readiness and Military Personnel Subcommittees, we share the goal of recruiting and retaining our nation’s best and brightest for military service.

In the AP article, you stated that the survey data is a tool to “assuage the concerns that some may have, whether influencers or members of Congress, about wokeness or the vaccine mandate – which is now rescinded – and show they are not, by any means, primary drivers of the recruiting challenges we’re experiencing.”

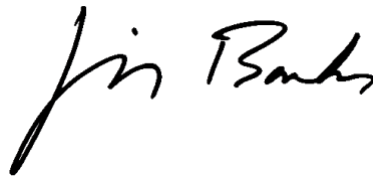
In the interest of transparency, we call on the Army to publicly release its entire data set, instead of cherry-picking data to fit a narrative. This issue is critical to our national security, and of great importance to the American people.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Mike Waltz  
Member of Congress



Jim Banks  
Member of Congress

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/poll-nearly-seven-10-active-service-members-have-witnessed-politicization-us>