

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074  
MINORITY (202) 225-5051  
<https://oversight.house.gov>

February 2, 2024

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

We are concerned about the U.S. Senate's recent ten-month blockade of all general and flag officers from February 2023 to December 2023 and the effect on the Department of Defense (DOD).<sup>1</sup> We write to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) undertake a review of this unprecedented blockade of military promotions, including the short- and long-term detrimental effects on DOD and our broader national security.

From February 2023 to December 2023, Senator Tommy Tuberville blocked the promotions of all general and flag officers resulting in more than 425 senior military leaders who were unable to assume their posts during this time. In many instances, the blockade forced acting officials to assume these roles without the necessary legal authorities for decision making. At a Senate Armed Services Committee nomination hearing in September 2023, U.S. Navy Admiral Lisa M. Franchetti testified, "...as we continue to not have the confirmed people that we've nominated with that experience, we're going to continue to see an erosion of readiness."<sup>2</sup> Adm. Franchetti's statement is extremely concerning given the critical national security importance of ongoing military DOD operations. For example, Senator Tuberville's actions delayed the Air Force Brigadier General nominated to become the deputy commanding general of the Ukraine Security Assistance Group from confirmation for nearly nine months.<sup>3</sup> Senator Tuberville's hold delayed the Marine Corps Major General nominated as commanding general of

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<sup>1</sup> *Senate Confirms 425 Military Nominees After Sen. Tommy Tuberville Drops His Hold*, NBC News (Dec. 5, 2023) (online at [www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/sen-tommy-tuberville-drops-hold-hundreds-military-nominees-rcna128138](http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/sen-tommy-tuberville-drops-hold-hundreds-military-nominees-rcna128138)).

<sup>2</sup> Senate Armed Services Committee, *Hearing on the Nomination of Admiral Lisa M. Franchetti, USN for Reappointment to the Grade of Admiral and to be Chief of Naval Operations* (Sept. 14, 2023) (online at [www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/to-consider-the-nomination-of-admiral-lisa-m-franchetti-usn-for-reappointment-to-the-grade-of-admiral-and-to-be-chief-of-naval-operations](http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/to-consider-the-nomination-of-admiral-lisa-m-franchetti-usn-for-reappointment-to-the-grade-of-admiral-and-to-be-chief-of-naval-operations)).

<sup>3</sup> See Department of Defense, *General Officer Announcements* (Mar. 22, 2023) (online at [www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3337656/general-officer-announcements/](http://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3337656/general-officer-announcements/)); U.S. Senate, Vote on Agreeing to PN456-1-Air Force (Dec. 5, 2023) (Confirmed by Voice Vote).

the U.S. Marine forces in Japan—a critical component of our national security policy in the Pacific region—from confirmation for nearly eight months.<sup>4</sup> These are just two instances of the Senate’s unparalleled holds hindering national security.

Further, Senator Tuberville’s actions created a damaging ripple effect on the careers of service members at all levels.<sup>5</sup> While Senator Tuberville’s holds directly affected hundreds of senior military officials, junior officers indirectly lost the opportunity to rise in rank and gain experience. Such career stagnation radiates massive effects on factors such as servicemember retention, pay, pension, and future opportunities.<sup>6</sup> Military families are also forced to bear the costs of the Senator’s ten-month hold on confirmations. According to the Majority staff of the Senate Armed Service Committee, the hold resulted in instances of military spouses becoming unemployed because of their spouse’s career and location limbo; children of servicemembers ending up not enrolled in schools because expected change-of-station moves were blocked; and families having anticipated coast-to-coast moves cancelled after their belongings had already been shipped.<sup>7</sup> Adm. Franchetti further testified in the September 2023 hearing that “... Navy families are dealing with a lot of uncertainty... And I have heard a lot of concerns from our families that they are having difficulty navigating that space right now.”<sup>8</sup> It is critical that Congress understand the full effects of the hold on military families.

For the above reasons, we request that GAO conduct a review that evaluates the following questions:

1. What effect did Senator Tuberville’s hold on military promotions have on overall military readiness?
2. What effect did Senator Tuberville’s hold on military promotions have on national security?
3. What effect did Senator Tuberville’s hold on military promotions have on military families?

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<sup>4</sup> See Department of Defense, *General Officer Announcements* (Apr. 24, 2023) (online at [www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3372070/general-officer-announcements/](http://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3372070/general-officer-announcements/)); U.S. Senate, Vote on Agreeing to PN540-Maj. Gen. Roger B. Turner Jr.-Marine Corps (Dec. 5, 2023) (Confirmed by Voice Vote).

<sup>5</sup> Carlos Del Toro, Frank Kendall and Christine Wormuth, *Three Service Secretaries to Tuberville: Stop this Dangerous Hold on Senior Officers*, Washington Post (Sept. 4, 2023) (online at [www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/09/04/army-navy-air-force-secretaries-tuberville-military-hold/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/09/04/army-navy-air-force-secretaries-tuberville-military-hold/)).

<sup>6</sup> *Senate Confirms Chairman of Joint Chiefs as GOP Senator Still Blocking Hundreds of Military Nominees*, Associated Press (Sept. 20, 2023) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/tommy-tuberville-military-nominations-joint-chiefs-senate-d9e1471916db9652501128370455746c>).

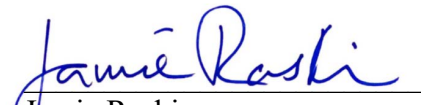
<sup>7</sup> Senate Committee on Armed Services, Majority Staff, *Fact Sheet: Senate Holds on Military Promotions* (Sept. 12, 2023) (online at [www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/fact\\_sheet\\_on\\_military\\_promotions\\_holds2.pdf](http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/fact_sheet_on_military_promotions_holds2.pdf)).

<sup>8</sup> Senate Armed Services Committee, *Hearing on the Nomination of Admiral Lisa M. Franchetti, USN for Reappointment to the Grade of Admiral and to be Chief of Naval Operations* (Sept. 14, 2023) (online at [www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/to-consider-the-nomination-of-admiral-lisa-m-franchetti-usn-for-reappointment-to-the-grade-of-admiral-and-to-be-chief-of-naval-operations](http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/to-consider-the-nomination-of-admiral-lisa-m-franchetti-usn-for-reappointment-to-the-grade-of-admiral-and-to-be-chief-of-naval-operations)).

4. What processes does DOD utilize when military promotions are stalled for prolonged and indefinite periods?

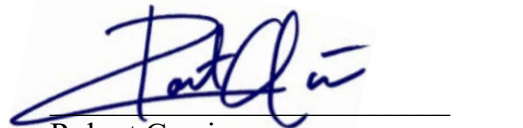
The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Democratic Committee staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,



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Jamie Raskin  
Ranking Member



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Robert Garcia  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on National Security,  
the Border, and Foreign Affairs

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

The Honorable Glenn Grothman, Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security, the Border, and Foreign Affairs