

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 6, 2026

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1300 Defense Pentagon
Washington DC 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth,

We write concerning reports of your unprecedented decision to personally remove qualified Officers from consideration for promotion to Brigadier General, Major General and Flag Officer.^{1 2} These actions raise concerns regarding the criteria, process, and authorities utilized to make changes to promotion recommendations after completion of the highly regulated military promotion board process.³

The promotion system for General Officers is intended to promote personnel with leadership, operational, and institutional knowledge that will provide useful expertise to not only the military but the elected leadership of this nation. These promotions are based on merit, qualifications, and the needs of the U.S. Armed Forces.⁴ It is imperative that the decision to promote an Officer is made in accordance with the law, established military personnel policies and regulations, and the principle of a professional, apolitical military.

We recognize the importance of having the most qualified Officers serving in these positions of great responsibility. While there are valid reasons to remove Officers from consideration for promotion for reasons that often involve sensitive or adverse information; public reports indicate your actions may be politically motivated, disregards the many achievements of these Officers, and shirks the idea of an apolitical military.^{5 6} Additionally, there are reports that your decisions are affecting morale among all ranks of Officers.⁷

¹ Seligman, L. (June 1, 2026). *Hegseth Blocks Eight Navy Senior Officer Promotions*. Wall Street Journal. <https://www.wsj.com/politics/national-security/hegseth-blocks-eight-navy-senior-officer-promotions-aa536aa2>

² Ioanes, E. (March 27, 2026). *Hegseth Reportedly Removes 2 Black, 2 Female Army Officers from 1-star Promotion List*. Military Times. <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2026/03/27/hegseth-reportedly-removes-2-black-2-female-army-officers-from-1-star-promotion-list/>

³ See. 10 USC §624 (Title 20). [https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:10%20section:624%20edition:prelim\)%20OR%20\(granuleid:USC-prelim-title10-section624\)&f=treesort&num=0&edition=prelim](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:10%20section:624%20edition:prelim)%20OR%20(granuleid:USC-prelim-title10-section624)&f=treesort&num=0&edition=prelim). See also: Army Regulation 600-8-29. (9 September 2020). Officer Promotions. https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN30301-AR_600-8-29-000-WEB-1.pdf. Also: Department of the Air Force Instruction 36-2501(12 January 2024, with changes 2 September 2025). Officer Promotions and Selective Continuation. https://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a1/publication/dafi36-2501/dafi36-2501.pdf.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Lubold, G. and Kube, C. (April 3, 2026). *Hegseth has intervened in military promotions for more than a dozen senior officers*. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/hegseth-intervened-military-promotions-dozen-senior-officers-rcna266062>

⁷ Toropin, K. (June 6, 2026) *Female Navy officers say they fear a career cap after Hegseth cuts women from promotions list*. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/navy-promotions-women-hegseth-pentagon-e744efae3cc70902732fffce7ee1a69c>

Therefore, we request information regarding your decision-making process and rationale for removing qualified Officers from promotion consideration. Specifically, please provide answers to the following questions:


1. Please provide the legal and regulatory authorities you relied on to remove Officers from promotion consideration.
2. What was your criteria for removing these Officers from the promotion consideration? How was it applied?
3. Please provide the demographic breakdown of the Officers removed from promotion consideration.
4. Please indicate whether any of these Officers were removed for reasons other than military performance, professional qualifications, or conduct.
5. When questioned about these decisions you stated that there was a need to correct years of “gender and demographic engineering” that blunted the effectiveness of U.S. troops on the battlefield.⁸ Please provide all internal studies or other documents showing decline in effectiveness of U.S. troops on the battlefield under the leadership of these Officers.
6. Have you or your staff analyzed the long-term impacts to the force to include force management, readiness, morale, and overall, Officer retention? To include a 10-to-15-year planning outlook?
7. Do you plan on continuing to insert your authority over future promotion lists? If so, what authorities and criteria would you use to justify these actions.

We request a written response to all these questions by August 30th, 2026. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator



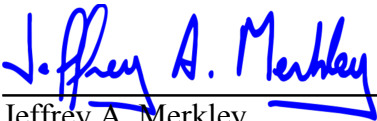
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator