

**ISSUES AFFECTING FAMILIES OF SOLDIERS,
SAILORS, AIRMEN, AND MARINES:
HEARINGS BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
PERSONNEL OF THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED
SERVICES, UNITED STATES SENATE, JUNE 2
AND OCTOBER 7, 2003; HRG. 108-670**

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ISSUES AFFECTING FAMILIES OF SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN, AND MARINES

MONDAY, JUNE 2, 2003

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Warner Robins Air Force Base, Georgia.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:00 p.m., in Building 1500, the Museum of Aviation at Warner Robins Air Force Base, Senator Saxby Chambliss (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Committee member present: Senator Chambliss.

Majority staff member present: Richard F. Walsh, counsel.

Minority staff member present: Gerald J. Leeling; minority counsel.

Committee members' assistants present: Clyde A. Taylor IV, assistant to Senator Chambliss.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR SAXBY CHAMBLISS, CHAIRMAN

Senator CHAMBLISS. Good afternoon. The subcommittee will come to order. The Subcommittee on Personnel meets today to receive testimony on issues affecting families of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines.

As we are getting started here and before I get into my opening statement, I want to, first of all, acknowledge a few folks that are here and make a couple of comments about where the idea for this came from and what we hope to achieve over the next several weeks with respect to a couple of hearings, two of which are being held today. One will be held in Nebraska, another one will be held back in Washington, DC, and possibly even some others after that.

We are just coming off a very difficult conflict in Iraq where our military personnel have performed just amazing feats. All of us as Americans, particularly those of us who are closely connected with our service personnel, could not be prouder of our men and women who serve in uniform and the job that they did liberating the people of Iraq. But just as important as the men and women who serve in the Armed Forces, are the spouses and the family members of those men and women.

It is critically important that we make sure that we make life as easy as possible for our spouses and our children because the last thing that we want a family member doing while they are serving on active duty is being concerned about what is going on back home. We want them to be able to take comfort in the fact that,

first of all, their spouses are well prepared to take care of all the family business and that they have the appropriate professional help at each of our military installations to make sure that happens and that they get whatever assistance they need.

Second, that the children of those military personnel continue to have the opportunity for a quality education, both while the spouse is at home as well as while they are deployed, and that those children are adapting to Mom or Dad being gone at frequent intervals and being placed in harm's way and that they, again, are receiving whatever appropriate professional needs and services that they might need while their moms and their dads are gone.

I would note that my colleague, and I will refer to it in my formal remarks, Senator Lamar Alexander who chairs the Subcommittee on Children and Families of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, is holding a hearing similar to this today. We talked about the idea of doing this several weeks ago, and it was unusual that both of us have shared this same concern, and the concern on my part was raised once again when I visited the spouses of a number of our deployed personnel at Hunter Army Airfield over in the Savannah area. He had done the same thing at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, which is on the Tennessee-Kentucky border, and that is where he is holding his hearing today.

Interestingly enough, there is one other individual who shares the same concerns that we do who has been very vocal about that. That is First Lady Laura Bush. At the First Lady's luncheon a couple of weeks ago she made specific mention of our children of military personnel and making sure that, or we want to make sure, in her words, that we are doing what is necessary to provide the quality education that these children need and also to provide them with whatever professional services are needed while their parents are deployed, particularly at this very difficult time in the life of those families.

I want to borrow something from her comments that were made at that luncheon that day where she quoted a sixth grade student. Her name is Kiara. She is a sixth grade student at Belle Chasse Academy in Louisiana. Kiara wrote a poem. She is the daughter of a military father. This is what she said. Her poem was titled "I Serve Too," and it reads as follows:

"I'm a military child, I stay strong when my dad goes away. If there's a war and my dad is detached, I will help him fight back. With my braveness and courage I can stay strong, my family's support helps me carry on.

"Whenever we move, I start over again, I have to go to a new school, and make new friends. Even though people think I'm a military brat, I just don't quite see it like that.

"My daddy helps defend our country, so we can live in peace and harmony. So all the military children help their mothers and fathers because we serve too, we're their sons and daughters."

I think that sums up the feeling of a lot of us who over the years have become close to these kids and have seen these children attend schools on base, off base, having, in some instances, critical problems that have to be dealt with in a little bit different way from what some of our other children have to deal with. I know we

have some folks here today who know a lot more about it than I do, and I really do look forward to hearing from them.

It is essential that the subcommittee take advantage of every opportunity to visit military communities and receive firsthand the views of those whose professional and personal lives so directly involve the well-being of the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families. No State is blessed with more outstanding representatives from the Armed Forces than Georgia, and it is fitting that the subcommittee's first field hearing of the 108th Congress be conducted here in Warner Robins.

I want to thank the Director of the Museum of Aviation here at Robins Air Force Base, Paul Hibbits, and all of his staff for hosting this event, and to General Wetekam and his team here at Robins Air Force Base for their support. These folks have been great friends of mine over the years, they do a terrific job, and I am just very pleased that a lot of folks from around our State are having an opportunity to visit this museum today. I hope you will take the time to look around because it truly is a great institution and a real jewel of our military assets here in our State.

Before we get started I would like to note for the record my appreciation of the strong advocacy of Senator Ben Nelson of Nebraska, the ranking member of the Personnel Subcommittee, on behalf of the men and women of the Armed Forces. The Committee on Armed Services has a strong tradition of bipartisanship, and that tradition could not be stronger in the Personnel Subcommittee.

Senator Nelson could not attend today, but he is represented by Gary Leeling, his staff member from the Armed Services Committee, and we thank Gary for being here. Thank you, Gary. Senator Nelson has a prepared statement that I will include in the record. [The prepared statement of Senator Ben Nelson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY SENATOR BEN NELSON

Thank you, Senator Chambliss.

I am delighted that you called this hearing to explore issues that are important to the families of our military personnel.

We ask alot of our military families. I think it is entirely appropriate that you conduct this hearing here in Georgia to hear from officials responsible for family support and from family members themselves about family life in the military.

The young men and women serving in our Armed Forces are prepared to lay down their lives in service to our Nation. We must ensure that their families are well taken care of—that they receive quality medical care, their children receive a quality education, and that their spouses and children have a quality of life that is at least comparable to what they would experience in the civilian world.

I want to thank our witnesses for appearing here today. I am most anxious to hear their concerns and learn what we can do to make their lives better.

Senator CHAMBLISS. I would also like to thank Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee who is a member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and chairs its Subcommittee on Children and Families.

Today, Senator Alexander is presiding at a subcommittee hearing at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, focusing on military families. Later this month we intend to hold a joint hearing of our two subcommittees. We plan to work closely together to identify areas in which we can cooperate in improving the quality of life for military families and share lessons with civilian communities about matters in-

volving family support, education of dependent children, spousal employment, and improved housing and healthcare.

Military families have been placed under tremendous stress in recent years. Even before September 11, 2001 and the global war on terrorism, the high tempo of operations for a significantly smaller military was a source of great concern for the personnel of our All-Volunteer Force. Since September 11, our active duty, Reserve, and National Guard personnel have performed superbly throughout Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom, and have responded magnificently to the President's call to be ready for all contingencies. However, the sacrifices by military personnel and their families, the separations endured and the problems that must be addressed have only increased.

My expectation today is that we will gain insight into initiatives taken by the Services in the formulation of policies at the headquarters level, and also in the implementation of those policies at Fort Stewart, at Moody Air Force Base, and Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay in providing support for individual members and their families.

I would note that the first question I raised was, since we are here at Robins Air Force Base, which has a special place in my heart, why do we not have testimony from folks from Robins, but I understand that the Services chose the people to come testify. We have great experts, we have experts here at Robins, too, who could also shed a lot of light on this.

We have three panels of witnesses who will testify this afternoon. First, we will hear from Peter Isaacs, Deputy Director for the Army's Community and Family Support Center; Rear Admiral Select Marc Purcell, United States Navy, Assistant Commander for Personal Readiness and Community Support; Colonel Gerald Yanello, United States Marine Corps, Deputy Director of the Personnel and Family Readiness Division; and Ms. Barbara Murray, Chief of the Force Sustainment Division, United States Air Force.

Our second panel will consist of key family support managers from Fort Stewart, Moody Air Force Base, and from the Navy's Southeast Region, which includes Naval Submarine Base, Kings Bay. They will be followed by a third panel composed of spouses of active duty military personnel stationed at each of those installations.

I welcome the members of our first panel. Your written testimony will be entered into the record, and in just a minute I am going to ask that you proceed.

First of all, I hope all of you saw me take my Blackberry out because if I do not take it out of this holster it will be dingling all afternoon. If you would please make sure that your Blackberries, cell phones are turned off so that we are not interrupted during the course of this hearing.

There are a couple of other folks that I would like to recognize. I mentioned Gary Leeling from the Democratic side of the Armed Services staff. I also have my staff on the Personnel Subcommittee, Dick Walsh, who is here. A couple of my local staff members, Greg Wright from my Atlanta office, my State director, Bill Stembridge who a lot of you here from the Robins area knows who is from my Macon office. We have Jared Downs from Senator Miller's office.