

# United States Senate

COMMITTEES:  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION  
FINANCE  
JUDICIARY  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

March 19, 2024

## VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Lt. Gen Steve Gilland  
Superintendent  
United States Military Academy  
606 Thayer Road  
West Point, NY 10996

Dear Lt. Gen Gilland:

I write today regarding the recent changes in West Point's mission statement. The mission statement of West Point has long been a beacon of inspiration for many prospective officers, reflecting the Academy's commitment to producing leaders of character who are called to serve our nation. Cadets have long been inspired by the notion of "Duty, Honor, Country," a phrase that has become synonymous with the Academy itself. Those three words serve as a solemn and patriotic reminder that our country is worth defending, with the utmost duty and honor. General MacArthur said it best when he told cadets that the words "*reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying point to build courage when courage seems to fail, to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith, to create hope when hope becomes forlorn.*"

I believe that as our adversaries evolve, our country's Armed Services must evolve to maintain its competitive advantage. But, at the same time, by maintaining a definitive mission, we will ensure our military always understands the values of the country they dedicate their lives to defend. When a cadet graduates from the Academy, they swear an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States – a permanent and sacred fixture for our nation. As they are faced with a daunting assignment, many brave men and women are carrying "Duty, Honor, Country" in their hearts, with some making the ultimate sacrifice because they believed in those foundational words.

While "Duty, Honor, Country" has represented a clear and consistent objective for cadets to strive toward for over sixty years, your new mission statement— focused on "Army Values"— represents a vague subjective that can be changed time and again based on cultural and personal preference.

More, as Russia, China, Iran and North Korea continue to test the will of the United States, West Point recently held its largest diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) conference.<sup>1</sup> While the U.S. military has been focused on DEI initiatives, our adversaries are plotting against us. Our military institutions should always have one goal – developing principled leaders and lethal warriors. The principles that have led generations of soldiers should not be erased to appeal to the cultural moment.

Please respond no later than April 1, 2024, to the following questions:

- 1) What specific considerations prompted this revision? How long was this change contemplated before it went into effect?
- 2) Who are you referring to when you say you worked with “external stakeholders” on this change?
- 3) In your view, how does the updated mission statement better align with the timeless principles and values that West Point has upheld for generations?
- 4) What do you say to those concerned that “Army Values” can be broadly interpreted to fit the ever-changing cultural climate?

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



---

Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator

---

<sup>1</sup> Paul du Quenoy, *Woke West Point abandoning ‘duty, honor, country’ is a shameful dereliction of duty*, New York Post (Mar. 17, 2024), <https://nypost.com/2024/03/17/opinion/woke-west-point-abandoning-duty-honor-country-is-shameful/>.