



**STATEMENT  
BY  
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**FOR**

**THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE FOR MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND  
VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**FY 2011 BUDGET PRIORITIES**

**March 23, 2010**

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**\*\* A participating organization in The Military Coalition \*\***



## CURRICULUM VITAE

CMSgt (Ret.) USAF John McCauslin was elected as the Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA) International President during the Association's International Convention in Dallas, Texas, in August 2005. He was reelected International President during the 2006, 2007, and 2008 Professional Airmen's Conferences. He resigned his elected office in early January 2009. On 1 June 2009, he became the Chief Executive Officer replacing the retiring incumbent.

Chief McCauslin joined AFSA in 1977 as a lifetime member and has been active within the organization. He was elected to his first term as the AFSA International Trustee, Retired/Veterans Affairs in 2003. He enlisted in the US Air Force in June 1955. After basic training, he was first assigned to Gunter AFB, Alabama, where he underwent medical training. Later in his career he became the Command Senior Enlisted Advisor, Fifth Air Force, Yokota AB, Japan, followed by Command Senior Enlisted Advisor to Commander In Chief to the United States Air Force Europe, Ramstein AB, Germany, where he retired after 32 years of service.

Chief McCauslin's educational background includes both military and civilian achievements. The Chief obtained Bachelor of Arts degrees in History and Sociology from Chaminade University, Hawaii, in 1976. He also achieved Masters of Arts degrees in Management/Supervision and Education from Central Michigan University in 1978.

Following Chief McCauslin's retirement from the Air Force in 1987, he was the AFSA Special Assistant to the Executive Director and subsequently, Chief Field Operations for the Air Force Association. After his retirement, he followed his passion for volunteerism to enhance the quality of life for our Air Force members and their families.

His awards and decorations consist of a Legion of Merit, a Bronze Star Medal with one oak leaf cluster, a Meritorious Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters, an Air Force Commendation Medal with one oak leaf cluster, an Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, a Vietnam Campaign Medal, a Republic of Korea Service Medal, an Air Force Marksmanship Ribbon, and the State of Virginia Meritorious Service Award. In addition, he is the recipient of the Outstanding AFSA Division Award for Division 16, Outstanding Young Men of America, Outstanding Jaycee President and Outstanding Parent/Teachers President.

## DISCLOSURE OF FEDERAL GRANTS OR CONTRACTS

The Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA) does not currently receive, nor has the association ever received, any federal money for grants or contracts. All of the association's activities and services are accomplished completely free of any federal funding.

Mr. Chairman and committee members, on behalf of the 120,000 members of the Air Force Sergeants Association, I thank you for the opportunity to present our views on what we believe should be the priorities for Fiscal Year 2011 for the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee.

Air Force Sergeants Association represents Active Duty, Guard, Reserve, retired, and veteran enlisted Airmen and their families. We are grateful for this committee's efforts and I can't overstate the importance your work has to those serving this nation. The Air Force's most important resource – our Airmen – are a diverse group of highly-skilled and dedicated men and women who ensure our Air Force remains the most powerful in the world. Our Airmen have been continuously deployed and globally engaged in combat missions for over nineteen years.

We are grateful Congress understands this solemn duty and has increased the Administration's programmed budget in each of the past few years to fulfill that commitment. We believe more still needs to be done.

In this statement I will cover three broad categories - military construction, veterans affairs, and readiness and families – and identify specific areas we hope this committee will pursue during FY 2011. The content of this statement reflects the views of our members. As always, we are prepared to present more details and discuss these issues with your staffs.

## **MILITARY CONSTRUCTION**

**ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING IMPACTS READINESS.** While many focus attention on “front line” conditions during periods of war-it is natural and vitally important. However, we shouldn't overlook the value of providing adequate temporary and/or permanent construction, repair, and maintenance funds at home station installations. The quality of the facilities where military members and their families live, work and play directly impacts their desire to continue serving through multiple deployments and extended separations. We devote significant resources to training/equipping America's sons and daughters—a long-term investment—and that same level of commitment should be reflected in the facilities where they work. We caution deferring these costs, especially at installations impacted by base realignment and closure decisions, organizational transformation or mission-related shifts. Congress did approve in the FY 2010 Appropriation bill, \$23.3 billion for military construction and family housing which will fund many projects for the Active Duty, Guard and Reserve, and military families. These funds will be used to upgrade barracks and child care centers, provide readiness centers, and more family base housing. Each of these projects and others are very important and we thank you for funding them. Oversight of these important projects is paramount in making sure that they are completed and the Force benefits.

**HOUSING PRIVATIZATION.** We urge congress to keep a keen over-sight on the privatization of military housing. Areas of concern include maintenance and upkeep of the housing, renting military housing to those who have no affiliation with DoD (so that they simply have the housing occupied), and employing contractors with a true interest in providing quality military housing and who are not focused on the highest financial gains any way possible. In 1996 the Military Housing Privatization Initiative was enacted into law with the "...goal of revitalizing, replacing, or demolishing all inadequate housing by 2007..." At that time "approximately 10 percent of all families lived on-base, in government-owned military housing that is often dilapidated, too small, and lacked modern facilities. Forty three percent (or 58,000 units) were substandard" (DOD). As of January 2010 there are 186,870 military housing construction projects awarded to contractors at military installations across the U.S. with the intent of revitalizing, replacing, or demolishing facilities to create a better living environment for our service members. AFSA urges Congress to fully fund appropriate accounts to ensure all remaining installations eliminate substandard housing as quickly as possible. Those devoted to serving this country deserve nothing less.

**CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND FITNESS CENTERS.** Tremendous strides have been made to improve access to quality child care and fitness centers on military installations and we are grateful to the Department of Defense and Congress for your collective efforts addressing these areas of concern. There is still more work to be done. The demand for child care continues to grow as a larger percentage of military members have young children. As such, the Air Force named July 2009 - July 2010 as the Year of the Air Force Family and has focused over this period of time on implementing changes and introducing new family support programs that will keep pace with the needs of Airmen and their families. The Air Force plans to add capacity to their child care facilities so that every Air Force child will have a spot in an Air Force child care facility by FY2012 and also provide more support for exceptional family member programs. Funding these programs is essential to meeting force needs and developing an environment that will ensure service member quality-of-life. There also needs to be a provision allowing additional household goods weight for shipment of special needs equipment for their exceptional needs family member whether they're moving to their next duty station or making their final move after retiring or separating. For example, an E-6 had to pay \$7,000.00 out of his own pocket to transport Exceptional Family Member goods for a Permanent Change of Station (PCS), because it exceeded his allotted weight allowance for his house hold goods.

**HOMEOWNERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HAP).** This program is designed to help service member homeowners who suffer financial loss on the sale of their primary residences when a base closure or realignment announcement causes a decline in the residential real estate market and they are not able to sell their homes under reasonable terms or conditions. We applaud the actions of this committee to improve this program along with legislators like Representative Dina Titus for introducing H.R. 4324 which will allow the Secretary of Defense leeway in deciding the dates of eligibility for HAP. We would like the committee to support this improvement to the HAP because there are many instances where BRAC has affected military base communities differently. Many

service members are outside the eligibility range but are affected by BRAC closures just as badly and need help. This program may not be a big budget item but it has a tremendous affect on retention of service members.

**ENERGY.** Good energy efficiency practices are an important Air Force goal. The Air Force has requested \$250 million for energy and water conservation projects in FY11. This funding will help us to complete projects, which the Air Force finalized in their FY10 energy plan that will meet our 2015 efficiency goals. The Air Force is focused on using alternative energy resources that will reduce energy costs and improve the work environment for all Airmen. Additionally, the plan recognizes that aviation operations account for over 80 percent of the energy used by the Air Force each year, and directs Airmen and mission planners to continue managing aviation fuel as an increasingly scarce resource.

## **VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Taking care of our veterans is a solemn duty and is reflected in the trust between the government and its uniformed members that have entered into a contract where each pledges with their life to support and defend the constitution. Today, the men and women of the armed forces continue a tradition of honor and valor exemplified by past generations. It is important our country lives up to its commitments made to all veterans--the role models for today and tomorrow's forces.

**SUPPORT VA SUBVENTION.** With more than 40 percent of veterans eligible for Medicare, VA-Medicare subvention is a very promising venture, and AFSA offers support for this effort. Under this plan, Medicare would reimburse the VA for care the VA provides to non-disabled Medicare-eligible veterans at VA medical facilities. This funding method would, no doubt, enhance some older veterans' access to VA health care. The VA has an infra-structural network to handle this, and we anticipate the effort would be successful. This is an opportunity to ensure that those who served are not lumped in with all those who have not, and would, no doubt, save taxpayer dollars by potentially reducing an overlap in spending by Medicare and the VA for the same services. While we recognize the current Administration's intent to open the VA health care system to hundreds of thousands of additional veterans, we suggest that VA subvention can be used as a methodology that will economically promote this effort.

**"SEAMLESS" TRANSFERABLE MEDICAL RECORDS.** The record numbers of veterans being generated by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq underscore the importance of accelerating DoD and VA plans to seamlessly transfer medical information and records between the two federal departments. A lifetime DoD-VA service medical record will help veterans obtain early, accurate, and fair VA disability ratings, save the Department of Veterans Affairs funding, and facilitate pre- and post-deployment research that will advance standards of care. Additional savings will be realized by preventing the "doubling" of diagnostic testing which currently occurs when VA runs similar testing (MRIs/X-rays, etc.) to validate DoD findings. We are pleased the two Departments are working together to resolve this issue, and the work of the

committee on this matter has not gone unnoticed. The technology exists to accomplish the goal of a seamless record, and we urge the committee to assume an even greater, more aggressive oversight role and facilitate implementation of this important program as quickly as possible. The implementation of the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record by 2012 is long overdue and a welcomed step in the 21st century.

**CARE FOR WOMEN VETERANS.** The unique health care challenges faced by women veterans must be met with a sense of higher urgency from Congress. By next year, the VA estimates that women veterans will comprise well over 10 percent of the veteran population (includes women from all military services, Reserve, Guard components). During Desert Storm 41,000 women served in theater during the operational period (according to the *Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation*). Currently, women make up more than 19 percent of the active duty Air Force and approximately 21 percent of the reserve Air Force (Air Force Personnel Center). As of September 30, 2009 we have 471,079 women in uniform (from all military services), many of which have already returned from service in Iraq and Afghanistan. They too, suffer from the same effects of battle as many of their fellow male service members; such as PTSD, TBI, and Wounded Warrior issues that come with wearing the uniform. As the number of women veterans increases, the VA must be funded to increasingly provide the resources and legal authority to care for female-specific health care needs. We have been transitioning over the years away from the large male population of previous wars and conflicts and we must absolutely make sure that we do not neglect the needs of the women who have volunteered to serve our country.

**SUPPORT STATE VETERANS HOMES.** One hundred and forty state-run veterans' homes serve about 33,000 former service-members. These homes are a good federal investment since the states provide funding for two-thirds of total operating costs. We urge the committee to take a close look at the required level of support to protect these important national assets and further, to consider them as opportunities to provide high quality care for our nation's veterans while simultaneously minimizing the cost of providing that care and having a positive impact on homelessness.

With current military activities, our nation will bear the burden of a generation of service-members who have been inflicted with severe disabilities who will need a health care environment in which to live. In recognizing this, we must be prepared to fund, build, and maintain significantly more facilities than we have today. Unfortunately, many families will have to make the difficult decision to place their loved one in a veterans' home. It is absolutely necessary that our nation's leaders ensure there is room for them and quality care available. We must plan now--not later. We must determine funding now, start building now, and become proactive in our approach to provide long-term care for the next 50 to 75 years for this generation of service members. We also need to begin the steps to provide care for women veterans. With more than 1.8 million female veterans who have served in the military, according to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. It is projected that by 2020 women Veterans will comprise 10 percent of the Veteran population. The State Veterans homes will host more females in the future and we need to be able to provide the necessary services for them.

Unfortunately, the recently released State Home Construction Grant Program Priority List indicates a backlog of \$405 million in Priority One and \$946 million for all projects. Consequently, the \$250 million we received in FY 2010 through appropriated and stimulus funds is seriously inadequate, given the number of applications waiting funding. We desperately need to address this funding shortage in the FY 2011 budget and work to provide the maximum amount of funding needed to complete the required construction projects to provide quality care for our veterans (Armed Forces Veterans Homes Foundation). AFSA also recommends enactment of HR 4241 to properly take care of over 33,000 veterans that are in State Veterans homes across the country.

**EDUCATION PROGRAMS.** There's no escaping the fact that college costs are rising. As the gap between the cost of an education and value of the Montgomery G.I. Bill widened, the significance of the benefit became less apparent. For that reason, the Post-9/11 GI Bill is a giant step forward. However, we must make sure that the new Post-9/11 GI Bill stays current at all times, so that this benefit will not lose its effectiveness when it comes to recruiting this nation's finest young men and women into service. As a member of The Military Coalition and the Partnership for Veterans' Education, we strongly recommend you make the remaining technical corrections to the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Examples that stand out are active duty not receiving the \$1,000.00 annual book stipend, Title 32 credit for Guard and Reserve service, and BAH for those veterans or retirees taking on-line college courses full time.

## **READINESS AND FAMILIES**

**PERSONNEL SUPPORT.** Nearly 40,000 Airmen are deployed and 130,000 Airmen support combatant commanders from their home stations. These Airmen operate mission essential support operations and are working around that clock at home and overseas to support their comrades in arms through flying sorties, delivering passengers and cargo, providing combat support, and transporting patients and casualties. In support of these efforts and to continue this legacy we need to recruit and retain the highest quality service members. With our country fighting two wars and maintaining active component end strengths, it is imperative that we fund military personnel initiatives to include a 1.9 percent pay increase, and retention and recruiting bonuses for targeted wartime critical skills.

**PERSONNEL RECOVERY.** The increased reliance on military and civilian personnel supporting overseas contingency operations (OCO) creates the backdrop for an increased need of Air Force recovery missions that include crucial medical and casualty rescue missions. These types of missions show how important it is that we replace our aging fleet of aircraft to support operations overseas. We ask that you fund these requirements for more support and operational aircraft and that you fund the Guardian Angel personnel recovery program so that the pararescuemen can operate with modern mission essential equipment.

**AIRMEN AND FAMILIES.** Retention rates have exceeded expectations, as they continue to progress toward the desired end strength goal of 332,200 active duty Airmen. In addition to stabilizing their end strength, training programs and aircraft need to be modernized. With the need to save money and the desire to better partner with Joint and Coalition teams, the Air Force is providing Airmen with cultural and regional expertise and appropriate levels of foreign language training. The efforts to expand foreign language instruction for officer commissioning programs at the Air Force Academy and in ROTC include efforts such as encouraging cadets to take foreign language coursework and to participate in language immersion and study programs abroad. We also need to consider enlisted members when expanding programs of this kind and including programs that enhance expeditionary skills training to prepare Airmen for deployment.

The Air Force continues to expand its efforts to improve the resiliency of Airmen and their families before and after deployments. This year they expanded deployment-related family education, coupling it with psychological screening and post-deployment health assessments. Additionally, they are offering access to chaplains who provide pastoral care, counselors, and mental health providers trained in post-traumatic stress treatment at every base. The Air Force is also developing a continued support plan that includes promoting and encouraging mental health assistance and providing at-risk deployers with tailored and targeted resiliency programs. This very important initiative is urgently needed as a part of the suicide prevention program. To support this increased effort, they will need assistance to enhance mental health career field recruiting and retention through special pays and targeted retention bonuses.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, I would like to thank you again for this opportunity to express the views of our members on these important issues as you consider the FY 2011 budget.

We realize you possess incredible responsibility as caretakers of the taxpayers' money and must budget wisely, basing difficult decisions on many factors. Choosing what can and cannot be addressed grows significantly difficult. However, AFSA contends that it is of paramount importance to provide quality health care and top-notch benefits in exchange for the devotion, sacrifice, and service of military members, particularly while this nation remains at war. Putting hundreds of thousands of Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan to protect us is **not** a "pay as you go" situation.

AFSA also firmly believes while much attention is given to the combat capability of technologically advanced systems, the most valuable weapon America has is those that serve, especially those wearing the chevrons of the enlisted grades. If we expect to retain this precious resource we must provide them, and their families, with quality facilities that reflect their level of commitment and sacrifice.

Again, Mr. Chairman, we are pleased by the hard work of this committee and its commitment to America's veterans past and present. On behalf of all Air Force

Sergeants Association members, we appreciate your efforts and, as always, are ready to support you in matters of mutual concern.