I would like to thank Chairman Young and Ranking

Member Dicks for ensuring that this legislation, the fiscal year 2013

Defense appropriations bill, would not include any reductions in the

number of C-17s that are used and serviced by our armed services.

The C-17 is the Air Force's premier strategic transport aircraft, and

it remains the military's most reliable and capable airlift aircraft.

The C-17 flies more than 80 percent of all U.S. airlift missions while

comprising only 60 percent of the airlift fleet. The C-17 has proven

capable of delivering more cargo, troops, and non-war humanitarian

missions than any other aircraft that we have.

Mr. Chairman, this aircraft was instrumental in saving lives during

the devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan last year. In

addition to that, it was instrumental in aiding in the humanitarian

efforts that I witnessed personally in Samoa. Some of the other

missions include the delivery of 10,005 tons of disaster relief

supplies and the carrying of 13,812 passengers in response to the

earthquake that struck Haiti in 2010. In 2009, I worked with

Congressman Eni Faleomavaega to help get disaster relief supplies to

American Samoa after an earthquake and tsunami that ravaged that

island. The 10-day relief mission was conducted with the C-17 aircraft.

The C-17 provides rapid-response capability for relief missions

anywhere in the world, including--but not limited to--serving those who

serve us.

Mr. Chairman, in addition to these humanitarian efforts, the C-17

leads in providing positive economic benefits to our country. The C-17

is built in Long Beach, California, which I happen to have the

privilege to represent with my colleague Mr. Rohrabacher. The

production of the C-17 is responsible for over 13,000 jobs in

California, and it provides $2 billion in economic benefit. Nationally,

the production of the C-17 has suppliers in 44 States, all of which we

represent here. It supports more than 30,000 jobs and has an $8.4

billion economic impact.

While we are looking for ways to rein in spending, the C-17 remains

critical to our national security, to our humanitarian relief missions,

and to our economy. My effort today is to make sure that we have an

adequate number of C-17s that are available, serviced and maintained

for our Armed Forces.

Will the chairman and ranking member continue to work with me to

ensure that there is a sufficient and well-maintained fleet of our C-

17s in our armed services?

I would like to engage in a colloquy.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank Chairman Young and Ranking Member

Dicks for including language in the conference report that recognizes

the importance of increasing the fair opportunity for numbers of women

and minorities in officer positions and within the Special Operations

Forces.

Minorities and women to have an opportunity to fairly compete--and I

stress, ``compete''--are often underrepresented in the leadership ranks

within our Armed Services. African Americans account for 12 percent of

the U.S. population but represent just 8 percent of Active Duty

officers. Likewise, when it comes to Hispanic Americans, it's even

worse. Hispanics make up 15 percent of the U.S. population but number

only 5 percent of the officer corps.

While the number of women in officer positions has seen increases,

there is still a lack of women in top officer positions. In 2009, there

were 40 individuals who held the highest rank in our Armed Services.

Mr. Chairman, do you know how many of those were women? I'm sad to

say, just 1 out of 40. This shows that there is considerable room for

improvement.

Having served on the Transportation Committee with Mr. Cummings, much

work was done on the Coast Guard side, but really should be equalled

throughout the Armed Forces.

I was planning on offering an amendment to the Defense appropriations

bill that would make it explicit that it is the sense of Congress that

efforts should be made to increase the number of women and minorities

in officer positions, but it would be subject to a point of order.

However, I've worked with Chairman Young and his staff that going

forward we would continue to look at ways to increase women and

minorities within the leadership ranks and to give them an opportunity

again to compete for fair positions.

Chairman Young, will you continue to work with me on this very

important issue?

And I yield to the gentleman.