

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Troy Meink
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

February 25, 2026

Dear Secretary Meink,

We write to express concern about recent reports of proposed civilian faculty and staff reductions at the Academy and to respectfully request your assistance in preserving the institution's academic strength.

Recent media reporting indicates that the Academy is considering eliminating up to 140 positions, of which 52 are faculty and staff (with only 19 currently filled), as part of broader cost-cutting efforts. Internal communications further suggest that the Academy faces a \$10 million shortfall in civilian compensation. Particularly troubling is the possibility that these reductions could weaken cadet education and quality of life, and harm the Academy's ability to recruit faculty in the future.

We do not question the need for prudent resource management or responsiveness to fiscal constraints. But we caution that sweeping civilian staff cuts, implemented on abbreviated timelines, risk disrupting academic continuity, increasing class sizes, shrinking course offerings, eroding accreditation in technical disciplines, and undermining cadet learning outcomes. Former faculty and military officers have warned that drastic reductions could threaten the institution's ability to deliver a world-class education and may force cuts to course offerings.

Given this, we respectfully urge you to authorize the reprogramming of \$10 million in unobligated Operations & Maintenance funds within the Department of the Air Force to be designated specifically to defray the personnel costs associated with the Superintendent's office, to allow the Academy the breathing room it needs to phase changes thoughtfully.

The purpose of this reprogramming would be twofold:

1. Bridge the funding gap — by covering the civilian pay shortfall through a temporary reallocation, the Academy can avoid precipitous cuts forced by budget pressure.
2. Allow responsible transition planning — with that buffer, the Superintendent and senior leadership can evaluate personnel decisions against educational mission metrics (course enrollment, accreditation risk, field-by-field faculty needs), engage stakeholders, and implement staffing adjustments in a deliberate, phased, and academically defensible

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manner.

To be clear, our request is not a demand to block all restructuring; rather, it is an effort to preserve institutional stability while change is considered. A modest infusion of O&M funding now can safeguard against unintended damage to cadet education, facility management, and institutional reputation.

We would appreciate your assessment of the feasibility of this reprogramming, as well as any alternative approaches the Department may prefer. We stand ready to assist — including by working with the Appropriations and Armed Services Committees — should additional legislative action be required.

Thank you for your service and leadership in stewarding the Air Force's missions. We look forward to your thoughtful response and to working together to ensure the U.S. Air Force Academy continues to attract, educate, and produce leaders of the highest caliber.

Respectfully,



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Jeff Calk
Member of Congress