

Budget Committee Testimony
Congressman Joe Wilson (SC-02)
March 2, 2017

I am grateful for the opportunity to meet with you today. First, I would like to congratulate Chairwoman Diane Black for being named chair of the Budget Committee and thank her for her leadership of this Committee. As we face difficult economic times, I appreciate the dedicated efforts of the Chairwoman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee.

I am grateful to represent the Second Congressional District of South Carolina, a diverse and thriving district on the I-20 corridor, that is home to a few of our nation's most critical national security and environmental cleanup missions—Fort Jackson in the Midlands and the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site in the Aiken-Barnwell area. These unique missions contribute to our state and nation in countless, tangible ways. Each of these installations provides unique services to our country and requires our support.

Fort Jackson is critical part of our national security and military readiness. As the largest Initial Entry Training Center for the U.S. Army, Fort Jackson's primary mission is to train thousands of disciplined, motivated service members –training 53 percent of the Army's Basic Combat Training load and 56 percent of the women entering the Army each year. At a time when our nation faces critical threats around the world, from ISIL to North Korea and Iran, the mission at Fort Jackson has never been more vital to achieving peace through strength.

Additionally, Fort Jackson supports other critical missions, including the U.S. Army Soldier Support Institute, the Army Chaplaincy Center, the National Center for Credibility Assessment, and the Army's Drill Sergeant School. The impact of the base positively impacts the surrounding community as well, employing nearly 3,500 civilians and providing services for 46,000 retirees and their family members.

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A little more than an hour down the I-20 corridor from Fort Jackson is the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site in the Aiken-Barnwell community. This site is a national asset, responsible for supporting our nuclear weapons missions and conducting cutting edge research.

The Savannah River Site is home to the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility (MOX), a critical component of our national security and environmental clean-up mission. Currently 70 percent completed, when finished, the MOX facility will be able to take weapons-grade plutonium and reprocess it into a green fuel—a more secure and sustainable option than potentially placing SC as a plutonium dumping ground. It is imperative that we continue funding this vital mission for our nation's nuclear weapon's mission.

In addition to MOX, the Savannah River Site is home to many other vital Department of Energy nuclear security and environmental cleanup missions. Last year, the Site celebrated a milestone, completing construction of the Salt Waste Processing facility which, along with the Defense Waste Processing Facility, will greatly enhance the speed and efficiency of the remediation of high level waste. Other critical facilities include H-Canyon, the nation's only production scale nuclear chemical separations plant, and both K and L areas, which safely store nuclear materials. All of the missions at the Savannah River site are vital to bolstering our national nuclear capability and safe environmental stewardship.

Additionally, the Savannah River Site conducts critical research through the Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL). The Laboratory supports our nation's ability to produce tritium, and to monitor and detect capabilities for nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear forensics. It also enhances technologies for the nuclear clean-up mission at SRS and around the country, including ways to safely store and transport high-level radioactive waste.

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I respect and appreciate the difficult choices this Committee must make in the coming days and weeks. As you begin the Fiscal Year 2018 budgetary process, I ask that you consider the men and women involved in the critical national security missions being carried out at Fort Jackson as well as the Savannah River Site. These individuals are dedicated to their country and putting service before self.

I urge you to continue your support for the unique missions at Fort Jackson and the Savannah River Site that keep American families safe.

Finally, as Chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness, I urge the Chairwoman and the Committee to support a level of funding that will adequately provide for our military and provide for the national defense. The first priority of the federal government is to provide for the common defense, and I echo the calls of House Armed Services Chairman Mac Thornberry and Senate Armed Services Chairman John McCain in calling for \$640 billion to ensure that our service members are trained, equipped, and resourced to complete their mission.

Thank you.