POGO PROJECT ON GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT
Exposing Corruption. Exploring Solutions.

March 28, 2017

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, DC 20510-6050

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, DC 20510-6050

Dear Chairman McCain and Ranking Member Reed:

As you consider the nomination of Heather Wilson for Air Force Secretary, the Project On Government Oversight (POGO) hopes you will closely examine her post-government employment with several Department of Energy nuclear laboratories and any potential conflicts of interest that could arise due to that work.

In 2013, the Department of Energy Inspector General (DOE IG) conducted an investigation, at the request of the National Nuclear Security Administration, into Ms. Wilson's contracts with four Department-owned, contractor-operated sites.[1] The IG found that the four facility contractors paid Ms. Wilson's company $450,000 even though they did not receive any evidence that work had been completed.

Additional documents related to the investigation, obtained by the Center for Public Integrity, indicate that Ms. Wilson refused to provide any details about her work for the labs. DOE IG investigators noted in their interview records that Ms. Wilson stated "she was not going to account for her time in any detail."[2] POGO believes that the findings of the DOE IG raise concerns about her willingness to provide information to the Committee and other oversight bodies.

[1] Department of Energy, Office of Inspector General, *Concerns with Consulting Contract Administration at Various Department Sites*, June 2013. https://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2013/06/f1/IG-0889.pdf (Downloaded Mark 28, 2017)

[2] Patrick Malone and R. Jeffrey Smith, "Trump pick for Air Force boss frustrated auditors with lucrative, murky consulting for nuclear weapons labs," February 28, 2017. https://www.publicintegrity.org/2017/02/28/20740/trump-pick-air-force-boss-frustrated-auditors-lucrative-murky-consulting-nuclear (Downloaded March 28, 2017)

Although the contractors in charge of the nuclear the labs in question have since repaid the nearly half a million dollars spent on Ms. Wilson's alleged consulting services, Ms. Wilson's company, of which she is the sole employee, has kept the money she received for doing who knows what. This leads POGO to question how seriously Ms. Wilson will take her position as a steward of taxpayer dollars.

If confirmed, Ms. Wilson will oversee billions of dollars of contract work done by the Lockheed Martin Corporation, whose subsidiary managed the Sandia National Laboratory where she was employed from 2009-2011. While this relationship does not technically fall within the legal definition of a conflict of interest, POGO hopes Ms. Wilson will demonstrate to this Committee that she will work to ensure there will not be even the appearance of a conflict.

POGO believes Ms. Wilson should be questioned about her past employment and that the Committee should ensure she commits to an open and transparent relationship with oversight bodies. We have attached a list of suggested questions and believe the answers to these questions are key to protecting the integrity of the operations of the Air Force and to ensuring this Committee receives the information it needs to conduct its constitutional oversight duties. Ms. Wilson should not be confirmed until she has adequately provided the answers to these questions and proven that she does not have a conflict of interest.

Sincerely,

Danielle Brian
Executive Director

POGO Suggested Questions for Air Force Secretary Nominee Heather Wilson

1. In 2013, the Department of Energy Inspector General (DOE IG) conducted an investigation, at the request of the National Nuclear Security Administration, into Ms. Wilson's contracts with four Department owned and contractor operated sites. The DOE IG found that the four facility contractors paid Ms. Wilson's company almost half a million dollars ($450,000) even though they did not receive any evidence that the work had been completed.

a. According to internal DOE documents obtained by the Center for Public Integrity, you were asked by Los Alamos National Laboratories officials to provide an accounting of your time and work but you refused. DOE IG Investigators wrote: "He stated that Ms. Wilson was very direct with him, stating that she was not going to account for her time in any detail." Can you explain why you wouldn't provide a detailed account of your work for the nuclear labs?

b. Do you think it's appropriate that the Labs in question returned the money to the government but you were not required to return the $450,000 paid to you despite your refusal to provide a detailed account of your activities? What do you think that says about your integrity? Why should taxpayers trust you with their money?

c. Ms. Wilson, what projects did you work on while employed by Sandia National Laboratory, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and the Nevada National Security Site?

d. Did you inform the Office of Government Ethics about these projects?

2. The 2013 Department of Energy Inspector General also found that the original agreement Ms. Wilson signed quote "specifically prohibited activity related to 'business development.' Despite that prohibition, however, we found that these types of activities were actually one of the purposes of the consulting activities."

a. Ms. Wilson, do you recall signing an agreement that prohibited activity related to business development?

b. Ms. Wilson, what did you understand to be the purpose of your agreement with these labs?

3. In 2014 the Department of Energy Inspector General found that Lockheed Martin improperly used taxpayer funds to develop a lobbying strategy to influence an extension of their Sandia National Laboratory management contract--which they eventually won.

a. Ms. Wilson, were you involved in any way in developing this strategy?

b. Ms. Wilson, did you know that developing this strategy was funded with taxpayer dollars?

4. Ms. Wilson, if confirmed you will oversee billions of dollars of work done by the Lockheed Martin Corporation who's subsidiary ran Sandia National Laboratory where you were employed from 2009-2011

beginning one day after you left Congress. Though this relationship does not technically fall within the legal definition of a conflict of interest, will you commit to the committee that you will ensure there will not be a conflict of interest in your work?

5. President Trump recently issued an executive order barring his appointees from working on matters related to former employers or clients for two years. What is your understanding of how this executive order will impact your work as Secretary of the Air Force?

6. Your predecessor refused to publicly release the cost of the development contract for the B-21 bomber, claiming potential adversaries would be able to deduce information about the plane's weight and range. She had no such qualms about releasing an artist's rendering of the plane or publicly saying where major parts of it will be built and by whom. This is all information that could be even more useful to potential adversaries. This casts some doubt as to the real motivations for hiding the cost from the people who are stuck with the bill.

    a. In the spirit of transparency and accountability for spending taxpayer dollars, would you be willing to tell the American people how much they are spending to develop the B-21?

7. The National Defense Authorization Act prohibits retiring A-10 aircraft until after F-35 comparative testing is complete and reported to Congress as part of Initial Operational Test and Evaluation and you have developed a plan for addressing any deficiencies and corrective actions to address deficiencies and preserve the Air Force's ability to conduct close air support, combat search and rescue, and forward air controller airborne missions. Will you commit to this committee that you will not retiring any additional A-10s and report any evidence you receive of illegal destruction of A-10s?

8. If confirmed, will you ensure your agency staff timely and fully provides information and access to appropriate documents and officials in response to requests made by this committee and other information necessary to conduct effective oversight over the operations of the Air Force, including the GAO, Inspectors General, the Defense Contract Audit Agency, the Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation Office, and the Operational Test and Evaluation Office?