

AOC and EW Working Group: A Shared Mission for Nearly Three Decades

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In the summer of 1999, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) of the 106th US Congress convened a hearing on lessons learned during Operation Allied Force (OAF) over Kosovo, a NATO-led air campaign to halt the long-standing humanitarian crises in the former Yugoslavia. The hearing focused on suppression of enemy air defense (SEAD) systems, specifically US readiness to conduct electromagnetic warfare using primarily the EA-6B Prowler and EC-130H Compass Call aircraft, which had atrophied since the end of the Gulf War in 1991. US Rep. Joseph Pitts (PA), a member of the HASC and a former B-52 Electronic Warfare Officer (EWO) during the Vietnam War, lamented how the Department of Defense (DOD) had not learned how important EW is to mission success and the central role it will play in every conflict in the future.

Rep. Pitts decided it was necessary to educate his fellow congressmen, as well as DOD, about the importance of EW, so he established the Electronic Warfare Working Group (EWWG) as an official congressional caucus to help with this education and awareness campaign. The early co-chairs included Reps. Pitts, John Spratt (SC), Randy "Duke" Cunningham (CA), and Norm Dicks (WA). The operations of the EWWG were led by congressional staff, including myself, serving as Legislative Director for Rep. Pitts, and Mark Kirk (IL), who would soon become a US Representative (and an EWWG co-chair), as well as a US

Senator. The early focus of the EWWG was not only to educate, but also to gather support for additional EW funding and organizational change to improve leadership and training.

Educating Congress and DOD was no small feat. It required countless briefings, meetings, and tutorials. The EWWG quickly turned to the AOC and its cadre of EW experts, including Dave Adamy, Andy Vittoria, Ken Mathiasmeier, and Ken Krech, among many others. AOC was an indispensable resource to the EWWG in its early years. The EWWG also pushed for AOC to build its own government affairs department to provide the regular engagement necessary to educate members of Congress and staff.

In 2001, the EWWG welcomed a new co-chair, freshman Congressman Rick Larsen (WA), who represented Washington State's 2nd district north of Seattle, including NAS Whidbey Island, the home of the then-EA-6B Prowler and now EA-18G Growler fleet.

In the early years, the EWWG focused its energy on EA-6B Prowler and EC-130H Compass Call Awareness Days, advocating for additional EW funding identified in Service Unfunded Priorities Lists (UPLs), supporting a DOD-wide EW strategy, and providing congressional oversight of the Airborne Electronic Attack Analysis of Alternatives and the use of EW in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).



*The cover of
"Electronic*

*Warfare: The
Changing Face of
Combat.”*

In 2008, following a series of on-the-record briefings and panel discussions, the AOC (working closely with the EWWG) published a report, [“Electronic Warfare: The Changing Face of Combat.”](#) The report offered six recommendations to strengthen leadership, increase investment, and improve training and readiness. Years later, this report continues to guide the EWWG and fuel legislative activity. Of note, in 2018, the AOC worked closely with the EWWG to include the Joint EMS Operations Readiness Act (JEMSORA) into the FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This language helped lay the groundwork for the establishment of the DOD Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations (EMSO) Cross Functional Team and later the 2020 DOD EMS Superiority Strategy.

Now in its 25th year, the EWWG continues its mission today. It is led by the aforementioned Rep. Rick Larsen (WA), along with Reps. Don “Bits” Bacon, a retired USAF Brigadier General and former commander of the US Air Force’s 55th Electronic Combat Group and later the 55th Wing; Austin Scott (GA), whose district includes Warner-Robins AFB; and Representative Chrissy Houlahan (PA), a USAF veteran and engineer with an master’s degree in technology and policy from MIT.

Editor’s Note: In 2026, the current leaders of the EW Working Group for the 119th Congress are Reps. Mark Messmer (IN), whose district includes Naval Surface Warfare Center Crane Division, and Chrissy Houlahan (PA).

The [AOC continues to provide important advocacy](#) through its congressional education program and other Capitol Hill engagement efforts. The challenge of educating members of Congress and legislative staff never ends. It requires constant day-to-day engagement, honest analysis and trustworthy delivery of resources to aid the caucus throughout

the year. The EWWG has always been led by some of the brightest and most authentic members of Congress, and with the help of AOC, the caucus has been able to stay the course through so many years.