

**Testimony of Ms. LaVerne H. Council
Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Office of Information and Technology
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Before the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs
May 5, 2015**

Chairman Isakson, Ranking Member Blumenthal, Distinguished Members of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and veterans here and around the country – Thank you for the privilege to appear before you today. I am honored and humbled to be nominated for the position of Assistant Secretary for the Office of Information and Technology at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I would like to take a moment to recognize my husband of over 25 years, Bennie. Bennie and I are blessed with one lovable and joyful son – Troy and one surviving parent, my mother-in-law, Corrie.

I truly appreciate the confidence of President Obama and Secretary McDonald in nominating me for this position, and I am fully committed to bringing my proven experience as a Global Senior Executive in the development and execution of healthcare and Hi-tech information technology strategies to the VA.

This role is an incredible opportunity for me given my family's history in service to this country. My father was a Navy veteran; my stepdad retired from the Army after 20 years of service; and my father-in-law served in the Air Force. Last year my Nephew retired from the Navy after over 20 years of service. I represent a family that believes in this country and is willing to step forward when needed.

Although I have not personally served in the Armed Services, I was raised and influenced by many in my family who willingly served this country to protect the many privileges we benefit from today. I have learned a lot from veterans, And now it is my time to serve them.

Over the last few weeks, I have had the opportunity to meet with many of you and I have a better understanding of your concerns and priorities for the VA. You are looking for a secure, high service, accountable and responsive organization.

If confirmed, I plan to bring all of my experience and leadership to the OI&T team and quickly work with them to develop and implement a roadmap that will enable Secretary McDonald's vision to provide excellent customer service to Veterans. I believe that good technology requires solid engagement with people and focused processes that are developed to meet the veteran's needs. My focus will be to insure that the team is fully engaged in working on the problems within IT and on implementing solutions to create effective interfaces to our veterans and users communities.

Great technology requires solid engagement with people and sound business processes. When you have these two attributes not only do you get a “System” to be proud of ...you get a system that makes everyone proud because it is seamless and invisible. It is not the topic, but the enabler. It provides insights that were not expected and frees up the user (i.e., clinician, benefit analyst) to provide the answers needed.

If confirmed, I plan to create a roadmap that the team can successfully follow well beyond my time in this role to insure interoperability and continued delivery to the veteran. I also hope to show how agile and new technical strategies can result in useful solutions that will support the needs of the veteran faster than previously believed.

What I like about IT and what makes it so frustrating for so many is that the science is new and ever changing. It requires people that do not fear the new frontier but that understand the life cycle of technology to know how to bring the best in class to bear on behalf of those that have given their best.

During my career I have had the responsibility for leading some of the largest global technology groups in the world. I brought solid leadership to the forefront by collaborating with the business leaders to meet the goals and expectations of the user and most importantly the customer. We developed high quality; secure solutions and processes for the enterprise. This required three core practices within IT: Transparent Governance, Accountable risk management and Team enabled innovation. When these three key capabilities are in place IT works best.

If confirmed, I plan to bring these core capabilities to the VA and create a fiscally responsible organization led by employees that have the ability to quickly drive to the expected results. This will also increase the ability to attract and maintain highly qualified personnel, which is a requirement if you hope to have world class IT.

I have always enjoyed addressing tough challenges and have worked very hard to maintain problem-solving skills that support the capability to merge strategic, operational and tactical initiatives to drive growth and innovation. I am best when the customer - and in this case, the veteran - is the focus of the solution. The ability to put the core recipient **first** has always been my driver.

Good technology is secure and steps up to big challenges not with complexity, but with simplicity that can only lead to excellence. It requires courage and curiosity and a willingness to fail fast and move forward. IT also requires a can do spirit and a passion for success. If confirmed, I will bring all that insight and my passion to benefit the VA and our Veterans everywhere. Thank you.

