

STATEMENT OF MARYANNE T. DONAGHY
NOMINEE TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY, OFFICE OF
ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Moran, and to the distinguished members of this Committee. I thank you for your time today, and approach this committee with a deep respect for its role in ensuring that our nation fulfills its obligation to serve our Veterans in recognition of the sacrifices that it takes to serve in the Armed Forces.

I thank you for your consideration of my nomination, and for the advice and thoughts that the members of this Committee and its staff have provided during this process. I commit to maintaining that dialogue if confirmed.

I would like to acknowledge my family: my husband of 36 years, Andrew, who is with me today. We have three sons, a daughter in law, and another who will be a daughter in law in 10 days: Hank and his wife Jill; Andrew and his fiancé Kait, and my youngest son Connell; Hank and Andrew are also with me today. I would also like to acknowledge my Mother, Mary McGeehan, who I am sure is watching this hearing. There are many forces that have brought me here today, but fundamentally, it is family, and I thank them for their love and support.

I am humbled and honored to be nominated to be the Assistant Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection at the VA. I approach this position from a deep personal belief that aligns with the principles that our President and the Secretary have set for the VA: that serving our Veterans is this country's most sacred obligation.

For me, this belief is rooted in a love of my country, but is cemented by the personal experience of being a military family. My son, Henry, is a Lieutenant Commander in the US Navy, serving on submarines. My son

Andrew is a Veteran, having served as an Infantry Officer in the US Marine Corps. My Father served in the Army, stationed in Germany in the late 50's. As a young Marine, my Father-in-law fought in the Battle of Iwo Jima. His Father also enlisted in the Marines at a young age, fought in World War I and was wounded at the Battle of Belleau Wood.

I know the sacrifices of deployments, the character that it takes, and the life altering experiences that come with having served. I will bring this perspective to everything that I do if I am confirmed. It is why I am here, and I would be very grateful for the opportunity to work for the mission of the VA.

Secretary McDonough has communicated his priorities for VA, and emphasized his commitment to a safe, inclusive and empowering workplace for VA employees. He has also communicated that accountability is important, because failure to meet the standards of the VA workplace is a failure to serve Veterans. I know that the members of this Committee share this belief. I do as well.

I truly believe that the VA cannot fully meet its mission without continuous vigilance to ensuring that its employees, many of whom are Veterans themselves, are empowered to do their jobs, and to actively participate in continuous improvement of the VA without fear of retaliation.

I respect the role of oversight by this Committee, and believe that through the Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, Congress has given the VA tools and structure to meet some of its most pressing cultural challenges. I am committed to the principles set forth in the Act.

I am aware that the VA's Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection has experienced significant challenges since its inception. I have deep and varied experience in investigations, implementing strategies that improve organizational culture, and leading functions

within organizations that are designed for objective and deliberate analysis of institutional problems. I believe that this experience would serve me well to lead the Office, and if confirmed, I pledge to give it my all to lead with integrity, objectivity, and excellence in its work product. The Office will be committed to the protection of whistleblowers, and work with the Secretary to foster a culture that supports every employee to do their personal best job to serve our Veterans.

I feel humble, honored, and very lucky to have this potential opportunity to serve my country, the VA, but most important, the Veterans who are owed our best. Thank you and I look forward to answering your questions.