

Ranking Member Richard Burr

Opening Statement of Senator Richard Burr

Nomination of Michael W. Hager

November 14, 2007

Mr. Chairman, let me again thank you for taking up key issues before this Committee today. We've just completed one important responsibility by reporting a number of bills that will improve the lives and health care provided to our nation's veterans.

Now we turn to another important responsibility of this panel and the Senate - and that is the timely consideration of the President's nominees to important positions within our government.

Mr. Hager, I want to welcome you and your family before the Committee today.

Mr. Chairman, clearly all of the senior positions at the Department of Veterans Affairs carry responsibilities that are essential to the every day operations of that very important agency.

But, perhaps there are few positions that are as vital as the one Mr. Hager would fill if he is confirmed - and I have every reason to believe he will be.

VA employees are the backbone of the health care and benefits systems. It is essential that the VA have in place a plan and a vision for recruiting and retaining tomorrow's dedicated VA professionals.

Mr. Hager has an incredible amount of experience in overseeing the human resource programs at a number of large American companies

Those qualifications speak for themselves and have prepared him well to lead the office of Human Resources at VA.

But, it is not only his experience that is important for us to consider. Mr. Chairman, I have also personally met with Mr. Hager. And in my meeting with him I found him to be a serious and dedicated professional with a desire to serve veterans and his country in this position.

Based on these factors, I intend to support this nomination. And I hope you will move him forward as quickly as possible so that we can turn to the nomination of General James Peake.

Again, I want to welcome Mr. Hager here this morning. And thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing.