

Chairman Daniel K. Akaka

OPENING STATEMENT

Hearing on the Nomination of Raymond M. Jefferson to be Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training

July 22, 2009

Aloha and welcome. This morning's hearing is to consider the President's nomination of Raymond M. Jefferson to be the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training. Following Mr. Jefferson's testimony and questions from the Committee, we will turn to Joan Evans' nomination to be VA's Assistant Secretary of Congressional and Legislative Affairs.

I note that we have invited the members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions to join with us this morning as the Committee considers Mr. Jefferson's nomination. We share many common interests and issues with that Committee, including this nomination. I am hopeful that our two Committees, and then the full Senate, will move expeditiously to consider Mr. Jefferson's nomination.

This position of Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment and Training is a demanding and difficult one. If confirmed, Mr. Jefferson will serve as the leading advocate for efforts to meet the employment needs of our Nation's veterans. He will need to bring visibility and enthusiasm to the job in order to fulfill his job responsibilities. From the enforcement of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act to the alarmingly high rate of unemployment among recently separated veterans, his responsibilities will be significant.

The myriad needs of veterans who are service-connected disabled, homeless, or incarcerated will confront him – as will the concerns of women veterans, and the spouses of active duty personnel. He will need to work in close cooperation with those representing segments of the labor market, as well as VA and DOD, to ensure that veterans obtain good jobs and are able to pursue meaningful careers. At all times, it will be important that his office focuses on the difference between a career and 'just a job.'

Following any opening remarks other Members may care to make, I have the honor of formally introducing Mr. Jefferson to the Committee. I will share more details on Mr. Jefferson's exemplary work and military experience. I believe strongly that his combined service in the public sector, private sector, and military make him an outstanding candidate for this position.

Mr. Jefferson, I look forward to your testimony today, your responses to questions from Committee members, and to any post-hearing questions.

OPENING STATEMENT

Hearing on the Nomination of Joan Evans to be Assistant Secretary of Congressional and Legislative Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs

July 22, 2009

We now are moving to consider the President's nomination of Joan Evans for the position of Assistant Secretary of Congressional and Legislative Affairs at VA. This position is an important one to this committee because it is the key office for promoting transparency and collaboration between VA and Congress. If confirmed, Ms. Evans will be responsible for advising senior Department officials on developing and maintaining VA's relationship with Members of Congress and congressional committees. She will provide advice on congressional interest in VA policy and program development and implementation, while overseeing the management of all congressional hearings and ensuring that Congress receives pertinent and timely information about VA programs and policy issues.

The Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs provides support and assistance with respect to specific legislative activity; it monitors the status of pending legislation affecting VA; and it works closely with the Legislative Advisor in developing the Department's annual legislative program. In short, the office Ms. Evans is nominated to head is VA's front door for those of us in Congress.

Our colleague, Senator Wyden, is joining us this morning and he will formally introduce Ms. Evans to the Committee. Therefore, I will not go into detail about her background. I do note, however, that her long and substantial experience on the staff of Congresswoman Hooley should serve her well, should she be confirmed as she will bring with her knowledge of an appreciation for the importance that this office has in our day-to-day operations with VA.

I am hopeful that our Committee, and then the full Senate, will move quickly to consider Ms. Evans nomination for this important job.

As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, I welcome you Ms. Evans and your family.

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