

W. Scott Gould, Deputy Secretary-designate of the Department of Veterans Affairs

Opening Statement of W. Scott Gould
Deputy Secretary-designate of Veterans Affairs
Before the
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
United States Senate
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Chairman Akaka, Senator Burr, Distinguished Members of the Committee on Veterans Affairs:
Thank you for scheduling this hearing so expeditiously. I am honored to be before you today
seeking your endorsement to become the Deputy Secretary of VA.

During the past several weeks, I have had the opportunity to benefit from the Committee's advice
and guidance about how to better serve our Veterans and accomplish the mission of the
Department. Your support for strong leadership, open communication and positive results for
veterans came across in a bipartisan manner.

I am honored by President Obama's nomination to serve as the Deputy Secretary of the
Department of Veterans Affairs. And I deeply appreciate the confidence that President Obama
and Secretary Shinseki have in me to help accomplish their vision of transforming the VA into a
21st century organization.

I am acutely aware that transformation is a challenging task -- particularly in an organization as
large, complex and steeped in tradition as is Veterans Affairs. We faced similar challenges when
I was at Treasury with Internal Revenue Service modernization and at Commerce with National
Weather Service modernization efforts in the 1990s. We have dealt with the challenges of
transformation and innovation in the private sector at IBM--challenges still ongoing today,
because, in truth, transformation of large organizations is hard work rarely ever complete. It is
an ongoing effort to serve, to improve and to meet the needs of clients. My previous
experiences, however, give me confidence that the goal of transformation can be achieved by VA
employees with strong leadership, teamwork and especially the continued help and support of
this Committee.

If confirmed, I will join Secretary Shinseki in the Department's efforts to refine and implement a
basic strategy: to create a people centric, results oriented, forward looking organization. As the
Secretary has already articulated before this Committee, VA will:

- make Veterans the centerpiece of our organization;
- invest in our civil service to help them better serve veterans;
- continuously improve the timeliness and quality of services and support provided to
Veterans; and
- imbed transformational initiatives as part of our culture as we care for Veterans, like my
father, present and future.

If confirmed as Deputy Secretary, I will help lead the VA to accomplish this vision in three ways.
First, by synchronizing the people, process and technology necessary to implement the strategy.

Second, by transforming the personnel, budget, acquisition and IT systems that will enable modernization. And third, by overseeing the planning, execution and results of modernization by the main operating units including VHA, VBA and NCA. This will require leadership, good communication, investment in our civil service and team work among the VA's many internal and external stakeholders - including the VSOs. It will also require attention to a range of important near-term initiatives. These include:

- Successfully implementing the New GI Bill (Post 9/11 Veterans' Educational Assistance Act).
- Streamlining the disability claims system --increasing the quality, timeliness and consistency of claims processing, and updating the Disability Rating Schedule, while maintaining Veterans' rights.
- Ensuring adequate resources and access points to meet the health care needs of all enrolled Veterans, as well as those OEF/OIF Veterans and Priority Group 8 Veterans, who will be joining the system.
- Leveraging the power of Information Technology to accelerate and modernize the delivery of benefits and services.

And it will require accountability for our actions to the public.

In conclusion, if this Committee chooses to confirm me, I will join a team that shares a strong desire to serve veterans and is committed to transform the Department into a 21st century organization focused on the Nation's Veterans as its clients. I thank this committee for its long history of unwavering, bipartisan commitment to Veterans. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you to fulfill that commitment.