

Mr. Paul J. Hutter Nominee for General Counsel Department of Veterans' Affairs

Prepared statement of Mr. Paul J. Hutter
Nominee for General Counsel
Department of Veterans' Affairs

September 27, 2007

Mr. Chairman, Senator Burr, and members of the Committee, good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am honored and humbled to be nominated by President Bush to serve as General Counsel at the Department of Veterans Affairs. I am also most grateful to Secretary Jim Nicholson for his confidence in me.

Service to veterans is the cornerstone of our practice in the Office of General Counsel. We do not often have the privilege of direct interaction with our veterans, but realize that our legal advice has an impact on the service that our clients provide. We work hard to ensure that our advice provides every possible advantage to our veteran beneficiaries.

During the past 15 years, it has been my honor to serve in VA's Office of General Counsel as appellate attorney, staff attorney and in leadership positions in the field and at the headquarters. In addition, I served for 30 years in the United States Army and the Army Reserve as an Infantry Officer and Judge Advocate. As a Judge Advocate, I supervised lawyers in the capacity of staff officer and commander.

I am privileged to be the son of a career infantry officer and veteran of World War II, Korea and Vietnam. I am also proud that two of my

three sons are currently serving as Naval Aviators - one flying helicopters and the other navigating F/A 18s.

As the result of my family's service in the military, and my experience in the Army and the Department of Veterans Affairs, I have developed a deep respect and appreciation for the personnel who serve in our Armed Forces - and their families. Time and again they displayed the honor, courage and commitment that make our Armed Forces the greatest in the world. As time marches on, they too will become veterans.

I am inspired by them to continue to tackle the challenges of the mission of the Department of Veterans' Affairs - "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and orphan." If confirmed, I look forward to continuing my work with the team of professionals at the Department of Veterans Affairs to accomplish that mission. I am confident my legal and leadership experience has given me the skills to lead, advise and contribute effectively.

I continue to learn and act on the many issues that are of concern to our veterans. The General Counsel provides advice and counsel to the Deputy Secretary, the Secretary and other senior leaders concerning all legal matters involving the Department. The GC also ensures the quality, timeliness and accuracy of the work of VA's legal staff in the field. If confirmed, I will continue to work the issues facing the Department and give my very best effort to diligently and faithfully advise the Secretary and Deputy Secretary.

With me today are my wife, Mary; my parents, Dean and Helen; and my son, Ian. I am very grateful for their constant love and support.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for your consideration of my nomination. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.