

Testimony of Michael J. Missal
Nominee to be the Inspector General
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
November 17, 2015

Chairman Isakson, Ranking Member Blumenthal, distinguished Members of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and veterans who have served our great nation. It is an honor and privilege to testify before you today as the nominee to be the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I would like to recognize some special people who are here today. First, my wife Deborah and our son Jordan, who is a senior at Washington and Lee University. My sister Susan Lenner and her husband Sandor are here from Miami. In addition, former Attorney General and Governor of Pennsylvania Dick Thornburgh and his wife Ginny are present. Dick has been a great mentor, colleague and friend for a number of years. I would also like to thank the many friends and colleagues for attending today.

This would have been an incredibly proud day for my parents, Harold and Rose Missal, but unfortunately both passed away a number of years ago. Aside from family, the most important things in my father's life were his military service and his public service. My father was a World War II veteran who fought in Europe with the Army's 286th Engineer Combat Battalion. He was a proud veteran and truly one of the "Greatest Generation."

My father was also a state judge in Connecticut for more than 30 years. He instilled in me the importance of public service and the concept of "giving back." He believed that there was no higher calling than being in public service and working hard to make a difference in people's lives. I started my legal career in public service and have always desired to return to it. I cannot imagine a more meaningful or important role than the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Mission Statement of the VA is to fulfill President Lincoln's promise: "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's veterans. The VA provides essential services and benefits to our Veterans, but it has more work to do to live up fully to President Lincoln's promise.

This is a particularly critical time for the VA as it attempts to rebuild the trust and confidence it has lost from our Veterans, Congress, Veterans Service Organizations and the American public. The VA Inspector General plays a crucial and independent role in assisting the VA meet its mission and identifying the instances where it falls short. The need to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse and to promote efficiency and integrity at the VA may never have been greater. Recent public reports from the Office of Inspector General and elsewhere underscore the need for significant and prompt improvements in the way the VA is servicing our Veterans. If confirmed, I look forward to playing a role in strengthening the programs, policies and culture of the VA.

I have had the opportunity recently to meet with many of you and to hear your thoughts and views about the VA and the workings of the Office of Inspector General. The discussions have been extremely constructive and valuable. I recognize your bipartisan approach to these issues and the great frustration in the VA not fully meeting its mission.

Many of you discussed the important role that whistleblowers play in identifying potential issues. I also believe that whistleblowers are immensely important to the work of the VA Office of Inspector General. If confirmed, one of my goals will be to promote an improved environment in which whistleblowers have confidence that their concerns will be fairly and effectively considered by the Office of Inspector General and that their identities will be protected from disclosure. I will also take the necessary steps to ensure that whistleblowers are fully aware of their right to be free from reprisal for making protected disclosures and how to seek redress from appropriate authorities if reprisal occurs.

I believe that I have the experience, skills, judgment and temperament to be a highly effective Inspector General. My professional career has provided me with valuable and extensive experience in investigations, audits and inspections, three of the primary functions of an Inspector General. I have successfully conducted a number of complex and high-profile investigations, including serving as the Lead Counsel to the Examiner in the WorldCom bankruptcy proceeding, Lead Counsel to the Independent Review Panel investigating the *60 Minutes Wednesday* segment on President George W. Bush's Texas Air National Guard Service, assisting the Senate Select Committee on Ethics in its investigation of Senator John Ensign and being appointed by the Department of Justice to be the Examiner in the bankruptcy proceeding of New Century Financial, one of the largest originators of subprime mortgages. With respect to audits, I have routinely dealt with accounting principles and auditing standards and have chaired the Washington and Lee University Audit Committee. Finally, I have been involved in the inspections of various entities. This work included making recommendations on how to improve the efficiencies and effectiveness of the programs and policies of those entities.

My service on the Management Committee of K&L Gates and my role as the co-Practice Area Leader of the Policy and Regulatory practices have provided me with significant management experience. One of the practices under my jurisdiction is the firm's national healthcare practice. As a co-Practice Area Leader, I am responsible for the performance of more than 200 policy and regulatory lawyers and professionals. Among other duties, I am involved in recruiting, professional development, evaluations, compensation determinations, risk management and strategic positioning of the practices. The Management Committee is also responsible for the overall business and operations of the firm, including developing a budget for a firm with over \$1 billion in revenues.

If confirmed, I pledge to work tirelessly and independently on behalf of our Veterans and the American public. I also pledge to work collaboratively with this Committee and other members of Congress and their staff. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and I look forward to your questions.