

**TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF
KURT D. DELBENE TO BE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
FOR INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2021

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:05 p.m., via Webex and in Room SR-418, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Jon Tester, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Tester, Murray, Brown, Hirono, Manchin, Sinema, Hassan, Moran, Cassidy, Tillis, and Tuberville.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN TESTER

Chairman TESTER. I call this hearing to order of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. This hearing is on the confirmation of Kurt DelBene to be Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Before we get started, I do want to take a moment to recognize two titans in the veterans' community that we lost this month, Bob Dole and Max Cleland. Both these men are decorated war veterans, severely injured during service, who continued to serve their country, including here in the United States Senate. They never stopped giving back and trying to find common ground to solve tough problems, and our nation owes them a debt of gratitude as they both are examples for all of us to follow. I will tell you I knew both these men, and quality was number one. These folks, irreplaceable.

Now I want to turn back to the focus of this hearing. Mr. DelBene, I truly appreciate your willingness to serve. I also want to welcome your wife and the rest of your family that are here today.

It is my hope and the hope of this Committee that you are up to this task. I believe after our meeting in my office a few days ago there is little doubt in my mind that you are. The members of this Committee that have met with you—and you have submitted written responses to the prehearing questions. I want to thank you for that. But your testimony and your answers today is going to help this Committee make the final determination.

If confirmed, you would be responsible for managing all VA information and technology matters, from broadband in VA facilities to

staff laptops to cybersecurity efforts on behalf of VA employees and veterans. So quite honestly, if your office does not work well, employees cannot do their jobs, veterans may not get their GI Bill payments on time, and an app for veterans to schedule their health care appointments just might not work. And while your office is not currently in charge of the Cerner EHR program at the VA, that program cannot recover without a well-functioning OIT office.

More often than not, when Congress passes new legislation for the VA, OIT is called upon to deliver IT solutions to ensure the law is implemented effectively. And while there have been successes, there have also been significant IT challenges at the VA. So today I am interested in hearing about how, if confirmed, you will leverage your considerable experience over the last two decades of private sector work to apply to this VA.

One of my ongoing priorities has been a bipartisan bill I have worked on with the Ranking Member and others to increase the transparency of VA's IT operation. That way, Congress can better judge the VA's performance and understand what authorities, guardrails, and funding may be needed to generate better outcomes. When we get that bill signed into law and if you are confirmed, I look forward to working with you on implementing it.

If we did not know it before, the COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated that IT can, when managed correctly, provide veterans and VA employees with important tools to deliver care and benefits when in-person visits are not possible. I look forward to hearing about your views to strengthen VA's IT operations.

Again, I truly want to thank you for your willingness to serve and look forward to your testimony and—

Ms. MELENDREZ. Senator Moran is going to stay on the floor. So if you would like to do an intro for the nominee and then swear him in, I think we can get started.

Chairman TESTER. Okay. So, a little bit about Kurt DelBene. Kurt is a technology executive that spent over 15 years of his career as a senior executive at Microsoft. He retired from Microsoft in September 2021 as Executive Vice President of Corporate Strategy, Core Services Engineering, and Operations, leading the company's cross-engineering and cross business strategy, executing, and planning initiatives.

From December 2013 to July 2014, after the website's initial failure, he was brought in to help fix Healthcare.gov as a senior advisor to the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Mr. DelBene helped assess and implement the path through the first open enrollment period, including troubleshooting issues encountered along the way and setting the project up for long term success.

Now prior to joining Microsoft, Kurt DelBene was a management consultant with McKinsey and Company, focusing on business strategy for technology companies. He has also worked as a software developer and systems engineer for AT&T Bell Laboratories, working in graphics and imaging software and network switching systems.

Kurt DelBene holds a master's of business administration degree from the University of Chicago, a master's of science degree from Stanford University, and a bachelor's in industrial engineering from the University of Arizona.

Kurt DelBene is married to Democratic Congresswoman Suzan DelBene, who has represented Washington's 1st congressional district since 2012.

Mr. DelBene, could you please stand and raise your right hand? Do you, Kurt DelBene, solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give before the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. DELBENE. I do.

Chairman TESTER. Let the record reflect that Mr. DelBene answered in the affirmative.

You can go proceed with your testimony.

STATEMENT OF KURT D. DELBENE

Mr. DELBENE. Great. Thank you, Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Moran, and distinguished members of the Committee. My personal thanks also to our great Senator from Washington State, Patty Murray, for her support throughout the way. It is my true honor to be nominated as the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Information and Technology and Chief Information Officer of the Department of Veterans Affairs and to have an opportunity to talk with you today.

I would like to start by introducing and thanking my family who is with me this morning, or this afternoon, and for their support. As you said, my wife, Suzan, is a member of the House of Representatives, representing Washington State's 1st congressional district. Our daughter, Rebecca, works in philanthropy in the Seattle area. Our son, Zach, is a software developer, and his partner, Lisa, is a software program manager. I am so proud of them and thankful for their support through the years.

I am honored to be considered to serve as the CIO and to serve our Nation's veterans. My father served in the United States Army in World War II, and my stepfather served in the U.S. Navy. I grew up with the deepest respect for our military and for veterans who have committed themselves to the difficult and often dangerous work of defending us.

I grew up in a family where service to others is a priority. My mother was a therapist specializing in helping people struggling from substance abuse. My father was a counselor for troubled, incarcerated youth. My sister is a director of nursing at UW Medical Center. My wife, Suzan, has dedicated herself to serving our Nation in Congress. I am also proud of our daughter's work with Youth Eastside Services, helping troubled youth.

All these are examples of service that have helped reinforce in me a personal responsibility to serve to the greatest extent I am able. This priority is what called me to help fix the Affordable Care Act website, Healthcare.gov, when it failed, and it is what drives my passion to serve the VA, our veterans, and their families today.

I spent most of my professional career at Microsoft. During that time, I had the honor to act as the executive sponsor of the Department of Defense and to serve the DOD's Defense Innovation Board, a board of tech professionals and academics that helped some of the DOD's hardest problems get solved. In both these capacities, I have experienced over and over the commitment, the intelligence,

and the devotion that our men and women in the Armed Forces have for our nation, our citizens, and for each other. From these experiences, I have developed a deep-seated belief that veterans, their families, and their caregivers deserve our strongest possible commitment to support throughout their lives.

If confirmed, I am excited to leverage my experience leading large software development projects and teams of similar size and complexity to help our Nation's veterans, to leverage best practices in commercial software development, to strengthen the IT processes in the VA, and to further enhance the already established culture of excellence.

I believe there has never been a more important time for IT excellence to play a role in the VA and in government overall. Information systems are at the heart of delivering critical services to veterans, especially now that the modernization of critical systems is underway. The Department is undertaking a large and complex replacement of their electronic medical record system, updating their financial management and logistics systems, and making critical enhancements to their benefits systems to enable support for caregivers. Excellence in delivering on the core mission of the VA depends on success of these systems' transformations. That is what drives me to step up and serve at this critical moment.

I have led similar, highly complex transformations in my time as a senior executive at Microsoft. I led the Microsoft Office organization during its transformation from on-premises software to world-class cloud service. I led the transformation of our internal systems development teams into a world-class software development organization. I believe that this same transformation is possible and within our grasp, not just for the VA, for the entire government as well.

I do not come to this potential role thinking that tech can solve everything or that commercial best practices can be transferred as is to a large and complex organization like the VA. I do, however, believe that for such projects to be successful they must start with a clear vision, a clear development plan, success metrics, and strong collaboration and partnerships with all stakeholders, including Members of Congress. Members play a critical role in oversight, enabling legislation and critical veteran support work, work that I have seen countless times in Suzan's office.

I believe that OIT can be a truly world-class organization and can be the source of great pride for the VA just as the health care and benefits provided to the veterans and their families through the Department are today. This sense of pride can, in turn, further enhance the team's capabilities and their joy and satisfaction in the work that they do.

So I am here today both humbled and excited by the challenges that the Office of Information and Technology has in front of it. If confirmed, I commit to do everything in my power to deliver on the core mission of the VA, build a world class technology organization, and to use it to serve our veterans, their families and caregivers. Thank you, and I look forward to our discussion today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. DelBene appears on page 27 of the Appendix.]

Chairman TESTER. I want to thank you for your statement, Mr. DelBene, and I will also tell you that I look forward to getting you confirmed so you can get on the job and start doing what I think can be some really, really, really good work for our veterans and this Nation.

So if you are confirmed, one of the challenges you are going to face is how to prioritize which projects and areas get IT funding, maintaining old systems versus replacing with new equipment versus funding new projects. So you have considerable experience, and from that experience in the private sector how would you approach setting up a process so that every part of VA has its top IT needs addressed?

Mr. DELBENE. Right. It is a great question. Thank you for that. And you inevitably get into the situation where the money does not meet all of the demands that everybody would have. I think for me the goal is to, first, if I was confirmed, I think I would jump in and understand all the needs across the entire organization and really start with what is the vision for that organization, what are the key things that need to get accomplished next. And then you have really got to stack-rank the priorities for each organization super clearly. There can only be one priority one followed by a priority two, et cetera.

And that is actually a challenging thing to do in and of its own right. You have to do that in collaboration with stakeholders so that they agree that those are the relative priorities. And then you have to bring it together across the different silos, if you will, the different investment portfolios, and then have the really difficult discussion of how do you trade-off what seems to be different things that they are all high priority. I think there you need to step back to the overall mission of the organization, collaborate with peers and with the Secretary, understand what all of their priorities are, and really come to that clear understanding.

At some point, there is always going to be those trade-offs and things that do not get prioritized as highly. You try to find workarounds, and some things you just have to defer and are going to get done in the future. But again, the things that you do do you need to make sure are clearly the high priority for the entire organization.

Chairman TESTER. Thank you for that. I want to reserve my 3 minutes and 15 seconds I have left and turn it over to the good Senator from Washington.

SENATOR PATTY MURRAY

Senator MURRAY. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. And, Kurt, it is great to see you here. Thank you so much.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Moran, I really—I am glad we are having this hearing here today. It is a real pleasure for me to have the opportunity to—although he has already been introduced—reintroduce to you Kurt DelBene as this Committee considers his nomination to serve as Assistant Secretary for the Office of Information and Technology and Chief Information Officer of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I think everybody on this Committee really understands the seriousness that our obligation has to our veterans, that when people

serve this country, they come home, we take care of them the best we can. And part of living up to that commitment is building the kind of technological infrastructure that has really been missing at the VA. It is well past time that the VA move into the 21st century, and Mr. DelBene is uniquely qualified to lead this effort.

Top of mind for me, as the Chairman knows, has been the really unacceptable system failures since the rollout of the new electronic health record system being piloted at Spokane VAMC in my home State of Washington and Kurt's. There is absolutely no reason in 2021 that the United States of America should not be able to deploy a state-of-the-art electronic health record system, and when it comes to the health of our veterans the VA needs to be doing everything it can to get this right.

And I am here today and really happy to introduce Mr. DelBene because I believe he is the right person for this job, and for me it comes down to a couple of key determinations. First of all, he is qualified. His work as a senior executive at Microsoft means he will be able to hit the ground running and lead on upgrading VA systems. Managing major projects in a large organization requires experience, and Mr. DelBene has a proven track record here. At Microsoft he served on the Defense Innovation Board to help the Department of Defense come up with solutions to some of the toughest technological problems facing our military.

And I think this is very important. He stepped up and led the private sector to help fix Healthcare.gov. Wading in and trying to fix the Affordable Care Act website was not glamorous work. If anything, Mr. DelBene signed up for a very tough, high stakes job in a politically charged environment. But he kept his head down, he did the work, and he delivered because millions of families were counting on him. This is what we need to see at the VA.

Mr. DelBene comes from my home State of Washington, and he is someone who believes in serving others. His record shows it, and he has grown up all his life around his family who lives the same values. Many of us know the character of his wife, our colleague in the House, Congresswoman Suzan DelBene.

And I believe it really matters that we do appoint someone qualified, who is ready to do this job for the right reasons, because this work is going to be hard and the stakes are high. But I have spoken with Mr. DelBene, and he is up to this task. I believe in his vision and his passion to bring VA into the 21st century.

And here on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Republicans and Democrats have always been able to find common ground in order to make sure this government is living up to its promise to our veterans because at the end of the day I believe everyone on this Committee is firmly committed to getting the job done for the women and men who serve this country. So let us confirm someone for this job who can get it done. I urge this Committee, Mr. Chairman, to waste no time in advancing this nomination so he can be confirmed and get to work for our veterans as soon as possible.

And, Mr. Chairman, I have several questions. I will just submit them for the record, but thank you for allowing me to speak.

Chairman TESTER. Absolutely. Look, I could not agree with you more, Senator Murray. I think we have an incredible opportunity—and I am going to get to you in a second, Senator Hirono. We have

an incredible opportunity to get somebody into the VA, doing the work in IT that needs to be done, that I really think we can have confidence in. So we will revert back to that.

Senator Hirono, you have the floor.

SENATOR MAZIE HIRONO

Senator HIRONO [presiding]. Thank you very much. It is very clear that the two of you have utmost confidence in Mr. DelBene.

Mr. DelBene, I ask the following two initial questions of every nominee who appears before any of the committees on which I sit, so I will ask you these initial questions. Since you have become a legal adult, have you ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed any verbal or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature?

Mr. DELBENE. I have not.

Senator HIRONO. Have you ever faced discipline or entered into a settlement related to this kind of conduct?

Mr. DELBENE. No, I have not.

Senator HIRONO. One of the major issues that we have been tackling in VA is the issue of the electronic health records, and I note that your responsibility explicitly does not put you in charge of the Electronic Health Record Modernization program. And I am just wondering why not because you are the guy; you are the IT guy. Why aren't you in charge of the system that we have spent over a billion dollars and only now are we saying that we have a system that kind of, you know, does what we expect it to do, as well as I think we are trying to get it in alignment with the records of the active—people who are in active service?

Mr. DELBENE. Well, thank you for your question. There was a reorganization, as you well know, in the VA that was announced last week of creating an executive director who would be responsible to the Deputy directly, the Deputy Secretary, to really focus on that project and then functional leaders underneath that would really take, you know, the perspective of health care and the patient, of IT and policy. And so I think that the goal there is to get somebody really, really focused and have the Deputy Secretary really dig in and lead that and feel that sense of responsibility.

Having said that, I believe that there is an opportunity for me to take the experience that I have had—

Senator HIRONO. Yes.

Mr. DELBENE [continuing]. In the private sector and in working on the Affordable Care Act's website to help. And I think you can count on me jumping in and getting involved with those teams to really see every place that I can provide my background, my understanding and help there. I think that is distinguished from the whole notion of who would be the particular leader.

Senator HIRONO. I think that whoever is going to be leading EHRM has to have the kind of background and experience that apparently you have. So I hope that whoever is doing that actually can do it and that as you seek to work with that person—in fact, is that person in place already?

Mr. DELBENE. The person—

Senator HIRONO. To do the EHRM.

Mr. DELBENE. That would be the overall director. I believe they have announced who that person would be, yes.

Senator HIRONO. Okay. So I hope that you will have that opportunity and there is not going to be this siloing of responsibility so that all of the experience that you can bring to bear is not fully utilized.

As we look at IT challenges, so clarify for me because you are going to be the Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology. So is it information to the veterans themselves that you would be also responsible for?

Mr. DELBENE. It is all of—it is the systems that that service or that care is delivered via. And so all of the—if you think about the main systems that are IT systems, be responsible for how they are developed, how they are maintained, and ultimately how that capability is delivered to the end user. I really think that it is important to look at it end to end in that way. If you think about there are people who build systems and think about it only from the perspective of does it do exactly what it is expected, I think you have to start with what are you trying to accomplish for the end user, and that is how I approach things.

Senator HIRONO. I agree. And isn't the end user the veteran?

Mr. DELBENE. Yes, it is.

Senator HIRONO. So I talk with a lot of veterans who do not rely on the internet, for example, for information from the VA, and one of the concerns is that there is a lot of information that never gets to the veterans in a way that they understand what their—what kind of benefits and resources they can look to. So is that part of what you are going to be responsible for, that this information actually gets to them?

Mr. DELBENE. I think you are talking about some of the complexities that exist in the problem of actually serving veterans with these systems. I think in cases where they are not computer literate themselves oftentimes there will be somebody, a caregiver or a member of the VA, that will help them. But you also have to go back to not just the vets that are computer literate but the entire population and figure out are they all getting care and what can you do to actually improve care, even if you are less literate in the systems themselves. So it becomes a complex and multifaceted problem.

Senator HIRONO. Yes. And I am particularly interested in all those veterans out there who do not have the kind of—who do not access the kind of tools that you are talking about.

Mr. DELBENE. Right.

Senator HIRONO. I am also really interested in your development of telemedicine as a way to really ensure that the veterans get the care they need as well as I have a bill that I have been working on that I am going to want to work with you, having to do with just data collection and access to data that will enable the VA to really understand the veterans and their—I guess identifying information that will enable us to better meet their needs. So that is something that I would like to be in touch with you on.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DELBENE. And I would look forward to working with you on that.

Senator HIRONO. Where did he go? Am I left to my own devices?
Oh.

Senator TUBERVILLE. My turn?

Senator HIRONO. Yes, please, Senator Tuberville.

SENATOR TOMMY TUBERVILLE

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you very much. Thank you for being here. Just me and you, we can sit here and make conversation. I saw everybody else going to vote. But, you know.

And thank you for your willingness to serve, you know, and what you are doing is going to help a lot of folks. You know, in Alabama we have 400,000 veterans in our State and got a lot of VAs, and we have got problems as everybody else, but you know, we need to take care of our veterans. I came from a military family. I understand it.

You have worked in a major implementation effort with Healthcare.gov. Currently, the VA is undergoing a massive, multipronged modernization effort addressing financial management and health care records and supply chain management. What challenges did you encounter while rolling out Healthcare.gov, and how would you apply your lessons learned to ensure a successful rollout of FMBT, EHRM, and supply chain modernization?

Mr. DELBENE. Well, thank you for the question. I think there is a number of learnings from the rollout of Healthcare.gov that are appropriate here or applicable here. The first thing is the way they approached that problem is essentially define an architecture and then sub it out to different contractors and have them work largely autonomous with each other and then bring it back together in the end. So it probably is not very surprising that when it came back together it actually did not function. And a lot of the—there was a bit of finger-pointing about like is this in my part of the system or is this in your part of the system. It really gets down to you need to have a team that works across these contractors in a complex way as a single team, and then nobody is pointing fingers at each other as to where the problem resides.

The second thing is we brought people in from the security portion of the organization, from the end user help part of the organization, and created a virtual team across all of the stakeholders to make sure that we had the representation of all the problems that we were seeing.

And the third thing I would say, which was really critical, is really to get clear on priorities. And you cannot—you know, when you get into an organization that is not functioning as well as it is, everything is priority one. Yet, you cannot do everything as a first priority at the same time. So you have got to strictly say, these are the things we are going to get accomplished in this order.

And then you have to have transparency with stakeholders and with external organizations and say: Look, this is the stuff we are not going to get done for now, and we know why. We will explain to you why that is not getting done. And this is the stuff you can count on us delivering to you right now.

And so a lot of that is what we kind of take for granted in the commercial space as how you function, but it is something that we

can bring, I think, to the health records management project and to all the projects in VA.

Senator TUBERVILLE [presiding]. I cannot imagine all the different entities that you work with. You know, being a football coach just trying to put people together and working together is hard enough. I cannot imagine all over this country doing, you know, the new implementation.

People are your most important asset in this business. Most of the Office of Information and Technology's resources go toward basic operations, like keeping the networks running, but you also need software development and you need talent. And, you need a core group of people who probably could make a lot more money in the private sector; we all know that. I mean, big tech is really hurting a lot of people, you know, when it comes to making money. I have got a son graduating this Saturday. He has already got a job in big tech and because it was easy. There is not many out there.

What types of software development skills are most important in what you are getting ready to do, and how are you going to recruit and retain these people, you know, that you are going to need to implement this?

Mr. DELBENE. It is a great question and something that I have given a lot of thought to. As you say, the differences in salaries between the public sector and the private sector are very large today.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Coaching and being a Senator is a lot different. You all have seen the salaries. So it is the same thing.

Mr. DELBENE. I think there is a couple of things I think are important. I think you have to figure out what are the linchpin roles, the critical roles, whether that is the quarterback on the field or the tight end—

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes.

Mr. DELBENE [continuing]. And figure out how are you going to create a process for how we work that leverages those key capabilities and has those people in the right place.

So for instance in Microsoft, we have a really critical role called a program manager, what many in the industry call a product manager. Those are people who understand the needs very deeply of projects but also can dive deep into what the details are of the program.

And so if you are thinking about you are probably still going to have to outsource a lot of the software development to contractors, but it needs to be a deep interconnectedness, that that program manager plays a really important role. And so if the organization can transform itself to be very focused on what the status is and the progress is on those key projects, and if we can get really world-class program managers, for example, in those key roles that are interacting deeply with contractors, I think we can change the tenor of the organization to be really energized in the role of delivering to veterans, which is an energizing, you know, occupation and thing to be engaged in to begin with.

I think we can also have pathways where it is clear you can start your career in the VA and move into the private sector and be very successful and also move from the private sector into the VA to deliver on the needs of those veterans as well.

Senator TUBERVILLE. In Microsoft, did you all use a lot of subcontractors? I mean, did you go out and use them, and do you foresee maybe doing that in this endeavor?

Mr. DELBENE. Well, I—we did in—we used to say that we would use a subcontractor in a place where it was not the critical system we were developing, but we are in a very different position in our ability to actually hire software developers. I think we are going to have to continue to outsource more or have more subcontractors in the VA, but it is not a—it cannot be as much of an arm's length transaction. It has to be a place where we deeply understand what is going on in those projects and we are kind of part of that team as opposed to thinking a bit more arm's length.

So I think there is a model here that does not require—and you hear a lot of people talking about we just need to have tons and tons of software developers in the VA. We would benefit from more software developers in the VA, but if we can get this rich model working that has good interaction I think we can accomplish our goals.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Well, thank you and good luck to you. It is going to be a hard endeavor, but we look forward to helping you. So thanks for your service.

Chairman Tester, this will go on my résumé as a chairman at one time of the Veterans' Affairs Committee for about 10 minutes.

Chairman TESTER [presiding]. Never, never been done better. I will just tell you that.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you very much.

Chairman TESTER. Senator Tillis.

SENATOR THOM TILLIS

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DelBene, thank you for being here. You have got an impressive résumé. I look forward to supporting your nomination. One thing I was curious about, have you been read into the organizational changes, the program office, or I think they call it the enterprise office, for the EHRM?

Mr. DELBENE. Not deeply. I have seen the press that has been announced, and that is about the level that I have seen it at this point.

Senator TILLIS. Well, I think it is healthy. I think it is going to be important to have people in there to mobilize the organizational structure, stand up the joint office with the DOD, but I think your experience can be a great accelerator there.

You know, when we were—I started my career in IT, in enterprise implementation work, and it was not a surprise to me when they rolled out the first iteration of the EHRM up in the Northwest that they were going to run into problems. A part of that is just the nature of change management, enterprise transformation. A part of it is a lot of legacy systems and a lot of different practices for doing the same thing.

Are you familiar with the concept of an application inventory and comprehensive inventory reconciliation? Do you think that is something the VA needs to do to better prepare for future implementations?

Mr. DELBENE. Well, I think it is always important to understand the entire landscape of all the systems that you have out there, how they are interconnected, if nothing else, from a security perspective. You need—as you, from working in the industry, know, you need to understand that landscape to find out the points of vulnerability, the places where you need to enhance things and just for the security, the privacy of the information, et cetera.

So I do agree that—and it is my nature when I go into roles to understand the entire landscape and from there distill it, as we always do, into the priorities, which are the systems that are working okay now, which are the systems that are in desperate need of improvement as well. So, yes, I agree on having that broad brush but very deep understanding of everything in the domain.

Senator TILLIS. Tell me a little bit about how your concept of ruthless prioritization worked in coming in and getting Healthcare.gov on sound footing?

Mr. DELBENE. Well, as I said, when we entered as a team, there were a lot of priority ones. And especially when the team is just trying to improve their own execution, as you well know from your time in industry, that is the time when the team needs to get focused.

And so we were looking at cases where, first, early on, people could not actually get through the system at all, so you could not get people to get health care. Beyond that, it came to the point where there were people showing up at the hospital that thought they had health care insurance but actually did not. So the most important thing for us early on was to get claims adjudicated, and in that kind of a world you need to talk about what are the features that are needed and fixes just to get adjudication working. And so you take the prioritization across those most important things.

At the same time, you look very clearly at the things you are just not going to get to. And so things like the financial reconciliation on the back end, we knew we had some time to do that. But we also knew we were going to get some grief of people saying, “why aren’t you doing this work?” And we were very clear and said, we are not doing that work because we have got other higher priority work that we have got to get done first.

And so that is kind of the notion of ruthless prioritization. You do not get to have two P1s. There is only one P1 followed by a P2 and down the line from there.

Senator TILLIS. When you are confirmed—and I hope we can do it on an expedited basis because I think it is going to be important for some of the transformation efforts that I agree with within the Department—what are your first 120 days going to look like?

Mr. DELBENE. Well, I think it is important, one, to understand the people involved, what does the team look like, what are the strengths and challenging areas in the organization. So that is certainly one part of it.

I tend to be the kind of a person who gets deeply involved in a project and understanding everything that is going on everywhere. You cannot understand to the minutest detail, but I love to get into the details and understand things, understanding what is going on with stakeholders. So I am very interested, for instance, as we

talked about, what are the challenges that have happened in the EHR system, what are the key things that need to get changed. And understanding that, you know, that is one of a number of projects across the board.

So my first 120 days I would like to understand the organization, have a vision for where that organization is going, have a look at what all the projects are, and get into that prioritization of what is the work that has got to be done in connection with the stakeholders, and really get on that rhythm of starting to get success upon success, where you are delivering for end users, in this case, veterans.

Senator TILLIS. Once you are confirmed—I am confident you will be—I would like to have your commitment for me to be able to come over to your turf and meet with the program office for the EHRM and not do anything but listen to a good program office review, see that prioritization in place, and continue to convince me that we have got the right people on the ground to deal with some of the toe-stubbings we had in the first rollout. But I think we have got a well-articulated plan, and I want to do everything I can to help see it realized.

Mr. DELBENE. I would welcome that kind of collaboration. I think that transparency and really getting into partnership with stakeholders is really kind of central to how I like to work, and so I would welcome that.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you and thank you for being willing to do the job.

Mr. DELBENE. Thank you.

Chairman TESTER. Senator Cassidy online.

[No audible response.]

Chairman TESTER. He is gone? The Honorable, most Honorable Gentleman and Ranking Member, Senator Moran.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR MORAN

Senator MORAN. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Mr. DelBene, thank you very much for being with us. Thank you for your interest in serving in this capacity.

The Office of Legal Counsel at the Department of Justice issued an opinion letter in 2017 stating that oversight requests from “individual Members of Congress, including ranking minority members” . . . do not trigger any obligation to accommodate congressional needs.” Knowing your family history, I hope you find that offensive. And I would ask you that despite the DOJ’s opinion on this matter, will you commit to accommodating congressional oversight requests regardless of party affiliation or committee status of the member making the request?

Mr. DELBENE. Well, thank you for that question. I think that is the way the VA has worked with both Majority and Minority, and you have my commitment to honoring the requests that you have because we are all in this together and it is all about being sure everybody has the information needed to play their role.

Senator MORAN. Thank you. And I do not think if you—I take that as an answer being, yes, you will provide the information requested, and I do not think that puts you outside anybody else that we have confirmed at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The VA requested less funding for OIT in its fiscal year '22 budget request compared to last year. The average Federal agency IT budget is roughly 9.8 percent of their agency's discretionary budget. The VA's IT budget is less than 5 percent of overall discretionary spending. In an era of increasing demand for information technology, explain to me how you will be successful with such a small budget that is not keeping up with the growth and demand of the Department as well as staff shortages of over 4,000 IT specialists?

Mr. DELBENE. Well, thank you for the question. Right now I am not well read into the budget request—

Senator MORAN. The part about the budget may just have been a putting people on notice, but I assume that you would have an opinion as to—about the needs that you will have, financial and otherwise.

Mr. DELBENE. I think it is super important in the role to understand the budget very deeply. And when I led my organizations in Microsoft we would get very detailed in understanding what are all the different programs, what is the amount of allocated to each one of those programs, and then talking about which ones are sufficient and which ones are inadequate.

And so I think I—one of the very first things I will do is understand not just what the projects are in terms of the work but in terms of the funding levels and whether they are adequate. And then I think if they are not adequate we need to come back and have a discussion about how we can improve. You can either improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the work you are doing, or you can figure out how you are going to change the resource levels for those to be appropriate.

I do think—please.

Senator MORAN. No, please. I did not mean to interrupt.

Mr. DELBENE. I was just going to say I do think benchmarks, like the percentage of budgets that are allocated toward IT, are important ones. And for that number to be out of line with industry standards I think it is something you would look to, to see whether that—whether the funding level is appropriate or not.

Senator MORAN. Thank you. Several members of this Committee are members of the appropriations committee that funds the Department of Veterans Affairs, and this is a good forum for you to make your case.

I think I am—my understanding is the Chairman has to leave and I am going to close out the hearing after other members have had the chance to ask questions, and I may have a couple of more questions. But while the Chairman is here, a couple of topics I wanted to raise in my opening statement unrelated to the witness today.

I want to acknowledge the date in history yesterday, December 7th, and the 80th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which put the United States into the world war with the Axis Powers, and I would want to express my gratitude to all those who served in World War II, and once again we would say, thank you.

Secondly, I would note in perhaps the same vein but a more personal one; I would note the passing of Senator Bob Dole. And I appreciate the Committee's efforts to acknowledge and honor his life and his service to the nation, and I appreciate my colleagues in the

Senate who have expressed their condolences to me as a Kansan and me as a personal friend of Senator Dole.

And I have indicated numerous times in my comments, public and private, that I am of the belief—and I do not know this, but I would—my impression and my understanding would be that Senator Bob Dole’s life in the United States Senate, in the Congress, as a Presidential candidate, as a Vice Presidential candidate was hugely formed by the circumstances he encountered first at home in a small town in Kansas, but secondly his experience as a—in the Army and his tremendous, horrific injuries that he encountered, changing his life forever in what we would know in a physical way, but creating a commitment to public service, to people with disabilities, veterans.

We were at the World War II Memorial this morning, at which we paid honor to Senator Dole, again a tribute that he helped create, in a significant way he created. And I have been to the World War II Memorial with many honor flights, and Senator Dole would be there. And he did not come to be on a pedestal or, you know, receive the applause of veterans who came to see the memorial. He was there to thank those veterans for their service.

And I would just use this as a moment to remind my colleagues of the tremendous service by a great veteran, one who happens to be from Kansas.

Finally—if you want to say something, Mr. Chairman?

Chairman TESTER. Well, I would just say that is entirely appropriate and in my opening statement I did talk about Senator Dole and talked about Max Cleland, Senator Cleland too, both people who I think you and I would both agree we need more of in this world and not some—neither one will be replaced. There is no doubt about that. But, people who set an example that we can aspire to.

Senator MORAN. Well, Mr. Chairman, thank you. And I do share those views. I would indicate you caused me to think of something else, which is that Senator Dole was cared for by the Department of Veterans Affairs in a VA hospital in Michigan, whereby just by circumstance, perhaps fate, he was treated at the same time that the later Senator Dan Inouye was treated at the same hospital. They became friends and then disappeared from each other’s lives only to rediscover each other in the United States Senate. And the same was true for Senator Hart, who was also at the VA hospital, now Dole VA Hospital, in Michigan. And it is another reminder of how important the Department of Veterans Affairs and its hospitals and its benefits are to those who served our Nation.

And I also would just perhaps more in passing, to say that this year, 2021, marks the 50th anniversary of this Committee’s existence. And, Mr. Chairman and my fellow committee members, I would express the gratitude I have to serve on this Committee with you, and I am pleased to continue to be able to tell my constituents it is the last haven—I hope not the last, but seemingly the last haven—of bipartisanship. And I hope we can spread the way that we do business in this Committee to all the other committees I serve on and all the committees that we serve on in the United States Senate.

So, Mr. Chairman, thank you for the manner in which you treat me. And sometimes I have the sense that you treat my colleagues on the Republican side better than you treat the Ranking Member, but beyond that you treat us all pretty darn well.

Chairman TESTER. Well, they are nicer. No, I did not say that.

Senator MANCHIN. Sometimes better than on the Majority side, too.

Chairman TESTER. What I would have to say to all that is just "Amen, brother."

Senator Manchin.

SENATOR JOE MANCHIN

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DelBene, I appreciate you being here and appreciate you are willing to serve in this capacity. In your prehearing questions, you acknowledged the need to expand broadband to veterans in rural areas. And I come from West Virginia. My entire State is rural. I do not have one city larger than 50,000. The largest city in West Virginia is 49,000 people. So I have a state of towns, and they are wonderful, but basically we are rural.

And broadband to—veterans in rural areas need the access that they have in urban areas, but the VA benefits and health care, we could not even do telehealth. We had to do audio only telehealth, and they reimburse. Just an unbelievable situation.

So I would say, if confirmed, how will you balance expanding initiatives like telehealth while also ensuring that rural veterans have access to broadband, that you can interact with FCC, things of that, showing where your real problem areas are?

Mr. DELBENE. Thank you for the question. And I think you hit on a couple of the areas that I think are really key there. For one, there is a signal out of—that will come out of the VA of where the health care is needed—

Senator MANCHIN. Absolutely.

Mr. DELBENE [continuing]. And where there are gaps, and I think it is important for us. And we can use the data that we have in systems and elsewhere in the VA to inform, hey, here is the relative priorities of where we need to improve—

Senator MANCHIN. What I might ask you to do, though, what is really important, the maps, the FCC maps have been horrible. They are showing basically coverage where there is no coverage, and that is because it has been self-reporting from the broadband or internet services themselves. They are showing larger swaths of America they are covering when they are not, and that gives them a little bit more areas.

Anyway, the maps working and the maps first, and identifying and looking at the FCC maps, we have been trying to correct those. You all could be invaluable in helping correct that.

Mr. DELBENE. I think that is right. I think we can basically look at where we have gaps in service, where we cannot go in, in telehealth, and contrast that with where the map is and identify those places where maybe a change in the priority needs to exist so that we can actually get that coverage.

The other thing I think you can think about is telehealth at different levels. You know, a device that is a cuff that connects via

cellular to the VA to monitor blood pressure is another solution. So you do not have to think of it as all full audio-video telehealth. There are gradations there, and we need to think about how we deliver on multiple levels and expand it overall.

Senator MANCHIN. So you will have the opportunity to bring the VA into the technology world really and increase that, and we need that desperately. We really, really do.

Mr. DELBENE. I could not agree more.

Senator MANCHIN. Professional areas in the State and all over the country and in VA hospitals and CBOCs and everything else, they are in high demand of needing quality people, personnel. So whether it be cybersecurity, whether it be nurses, whether it be doctors, whatever it be, it is difficult for a government agency to keep up with the private sector in competing for the people in those high-value jobs.

So I guess I would ask, what are your plans and goals to recruit and retain the talent that is going to be needed to implement and maintain the VA's many IT sectors?

Mr. DELBENE. I think a lot of it comes down to how do you define the organization and create an organization that is a modern, kind of state-of-the-art IT organization so that somebody looks at it as an opportunity. A college graduate in tech looks at it as a great place to start his or her career. How do you take somebody from the private sector and say, oh, my gosh, there is a set of skills that I can learn here that are valuable in the private sector, and by the way, energize them around the mission that they have today. And so we need to create an organization that is very state-of-the-art in terms of, you know, focused on vision and execution, agile development, and I think that will be an attractor of talent.

Senator MANCHIN. I always thought that the prime spot for you all to recruit from is the military.

Mr. DELBENE. I think there is a huge opportunity there.

Senator MANCHIN. Because, basically, people that have served are going to be very sympathetic and understanding the needs of veterans and there is a lot of people with high skills sets that can be brought in and be taught basically on these areas. I do not know what the VA is doing now in recruitment as far as active military that is going to be mustering out, if you will, if we are really going after that segment.

Mr. DELBENE. I do not know at this point in time. I could not agree with you more. If ever there were—

Senator MANCHIN. It is a natural.

Mr. DELBENE. If there were a skill set that you could inculcate in people leaving the military that would be valuable in the private sector—

Senator MANCHIN. Well, you are going to get people sympathetic to the military.

Mr. DELBENE. I am sorry?

Senator MANCHIN. You would want to—you know, some of the people that do not serve—you know, we only have 1 percent of the population is basically in the professional military.

Mr. DELBENE. Right.

Senator MANCHIN. But people that do not serve might not have the same desire or the same sympathy that we have, and empathy,

for people that do serve, but people in the military should. And I do not know if we just—if that is a good recruitment or if we have been using that to the full extent.

Mr. DELBENE. I think there is, but I think there is more we can do there, and I would be excited to work on that.

Senator MANCHIN. Well, I hope so. I hope so, sir. I look forward to it. The only thing I am saying is that monitoring as far as medical records, things of that sort, getting that integrated has been so challenging, and I am hoping that you all will be looking at that because, you know, for us to have time sensitive information when a person comes in, especially on opiates, the addiction of opiates that we have.

I had a person one time tell me—I kept saying, you know, we have so much addiction in the military. It is just ridiculous. And, our veterans going to the Veterans Administration or the hospitals. So I asked this.

A nurse one time says, well, if you politicians would not call all the time raising Cain about we will not give these veterans what they want, you know, because we used to basically—the veterans would report on the quality of care they are getting. If they did not get the type of drugs they wanted, they would report very bad, and it would make a hospital have a bad report.

We took that off of the reporting. They cannot—dispensing of medication is not one of the areas where we are going to basically evaluate that hospital, do they give quality care, best of care, mediocre care, because it was always based around did you get the drugs you want.

Mr. DELBENE. Ah.

Senator MANCHIN. But what happens is we do not have, we truly do not have, the records that are following that patient, a VA patient that might go from clinic to clinic to clinic, whether they are pill shopping or whatever. That is something that needs to really be looked into.

Mr. DELBENE. Well, if confirmed, Senator, I think that would be a great area to look into and figure out what does the data say and, you know, what do we hear from patients as well.

Senator MANCHIN. Right. Well, you can talk to some of the people and some of the nurses—

Mr. DELBENE. Right.

Senator MANCHIN [continuing]. That are in that, men and women who work in those departments, and it will just be unbelievable what they will tell you. We learned a lot.

But we will be happy to work with you. We have a tremendous opiate addiction problem in West Virginia, and everyone is affected. So we want to make sure that we—I mean, this is an illness, has to be served. We cannot be dispensing what we should not be dispensing.

But with that, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MORAN [presiding]. Senator Manchin, thank you very much.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

Senator MORAN. We will always try to treat you respectfully.

Senator MANCHIN. Always do.

Senator MORAN. Mr. DelBene, Congress is often, constantly in fact, asking the VA for data as part of our oversight responsibilities. We are looking for information that, unfortunately, the VA too often responds to us that the data is not tracked in a way that we are asking for it, if at all. If confirmed, how would you incorporate enterprise data requirements into the modernization efforts to make certain that the VA can measure its inputs and outputs and hopefully demonstrate the positive impacts the programs are having on veterans?

Mr. DELBENE. I think that is a great question. It gets to me some of the things that we do in the private sector. You will look at a problem, and you will think that the data that is presented first is the answer to the problem. What is most important, I think, is to step back and say, what is the root question here and then what is data that will actually go to support what you want to understand, the true question behind the question, if you will.

And so I think what is important is for us to get into a discussion where we say: "What are we trying to measure here? What are the measures that would be best to actually—to come to the right conclusion on that particular system?"

Sometimes there will be information that exists in the system; sometimes it will not. And so—and if it is not, we can kind of come around it from a different angle and say, well, is there information that is a good proxy for that?

And—but I think what it amounts to is getting into that back-and-forth discussion with you as to what is the best way to answer the question that you are really looking to answer.

Senator MORAN. I think a goal of mine would be to get to the point in which there is not a standard reply that, we do not have data to answer your question. And if you would work with us, one, how we ask the question or find a different way to answer the question that we are asking, that would be useful.

Mr. DELBENE. I think that is a great characterization. If you do not have the data, the next question ought to be, well, let us step back and figure out what are you trying to answer, what question are you trying to answer and how can we answer it. Senator MORAN. I like your answer. Thank you. Electronic health records. The modernization effort is so critical. How would you describe to me the CIO's role and how you intend, with the cooperation from the others at the VA who are responsible for electronic health records, to get us to the point we need to be?

Mr. DELBENE. Well, thanks for the question. I think part of this is I need to get—if confirmed, I would like to dig in and understand how the Secretary and the leadership are thinking about leading in this new world, with the new announcement in terms of the organizational structure. The direct responsibilities clearly are the infrastructure that the system builds on top of, is the responsibility of the OIT Department, and I certainly want to have excellence there. But I think there is also an opportunity for me to take the learnings that I have had from the private sector and figure out how do you use those to make sure you have success in the project overall, in collaboration with the leadership structure that he has put in place.

And so I think I really need to get my feet on the ground and understand how do we want to run this, but I think the thing you can commit—that I would commit to is it is important to me to solve that, to make the EHR implementation a success, and I just need to get involved and figure out where I can help the most.

Senator MORAN. Again, I like your answer. Mr. DelBene, how did your nomination come about?

Mr. DELBENE. Well, I retired from Microsoft after 30 years and was thinking through what I wanted to do next in my life. Service was important to me. And so when the Secretary, who I knew from working together on Healthcare.gov, came to me and said, I would like you to take on this role, I did some soul searching. It felt like a role where I can truly help, truly help a group of people that deserve our help. They deserve our help in how they transition from active service and throughout their lives.

I spent time talking with my family and understanding because this will be a sacrifice on us as an entire family, just the logistics of we are in Washington State and a lot of the work is here. And so we talked about it, and I think we concluded together this was something that was an opportunity that we—that I ought not to pass up and we as a family ought not to pass up.

Senator MORAN. Thank you. Thanks for reaching that conclusion. Mr. DelBene, I often ask our witnesses if there is anything they would like to add, something they wish to correct, something that was not asked of them, if there is something you would like to add to the record. Anything you would like to tell me?

Mr. DELBENE. No. I think it has been a great set of questions and discussion so far. I will say that I am passionate about the opportunity to serve. I go into it not thinking that tech has all the answers but, rather, my experiences can be useful here. I look forward to working with all of you to better serve veterans overall. I look forward to working with the organization that I will be joining and understanding it better, understanding the people involved.

And then the final thing I would say is what I get passionate about is not just the opportunity to transform the VA into a world-class technology organization, but it can also be an example of how we do that for all of government. There—it does not need to be a case where people say, we do this in the commercial sector or why can't we do this in government. We can do all this in government, too. And as systems become more and more a part of how we deliver care and services to our citizens, it becomes more and more important for us to have these world class capabilities in government to do so, and I think we can do that.

Senator MORAN. Thank you for that answer. Let me put it in my words and see if you are saying what I think you said, which is: "There is no legitimate excuse to say we are government. We cannot do this with IT. They can only do that in business?"

Mr. DELBENE. I am not sure I would put it in the negative sense of there is no excuse. I think the opportunity is in front of us to use these systems and these capabilities to deliver world-class services to our citizenry and to create organizations where people are proud in what they are—that they are having this mission and delivering this to our citizens.

Senator MORAN. I will try it one more time in the positive.

Mr. DELBENE. Okay.

Senator MORAN. The answer that I heard you say, or the comment that I heard you make, was that “we have every opportunity in the public sector to create a world-class IT system just as they have in the private sector.”

Mr. DELBENE. Very well said.

Senator MORAN. Thank you.

Mr. DELBENE. Absolutely.

Senator MORAN. You said it. I just wanted to make sure I understood it.

Mr. DELBENE. Thank you.

Senator MORAN. Thank you very much for your testimony, being with us today.

I thank the committee members who participated today.

The record of this hearing will remain open—this is different than usual—till 9 a.m. tomorrow. My assumption is—and I have not had this conversation recently with the Chairman, but I think the intention is his desire to move this nomination quickly. So 9 a.m. tomorrow, the record will remain open. Please have any post-hearing questions in by then.

And our Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:02 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

**Nomination Material for
Kurt D. DelBene**

**Statement of Kurt D. DelBene, Nominee for Assistant Secretary for Information and
Technology and Chief Information Officer of the Department of Veterans Affairs**

**Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
Hearing to Consider Pending Nominations
December 8, 2021**

Thank you Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Moran, and distinguished members of the committee. My personal thanks as well to our great senator from Washington State, Patty Murray, for her support and her very kind remarks. It's a true honor to be nominated to be Assistant Secretary for the Office of Information and Technology and Chief Information Officer (CIO) of the Department of Veterans Affairs and to have the opportunity to talk with you today.

I'd like to begin by introducing and thanking my family for being with me this morning and for their support. My wife Suzan is a member of the House of Representatives, representing Washington State's first congressional district. Our daughter Rebecca works in philanthropy in the Seattle area, and our son Zach is a software developer. I'm so proud of them and thankful for their support through the years.

I'm honored to be considered to serve as the CIO and to serve our nation's Veterans. My father served in the United States Army in WWII, and my stepfather served in the US Navy. I grew up with the deepest respect for our military and for Veterans who have committed themselves to the difficult and often dangerous work of defending us all.

I grew up in a family where service to others is a priority. My mother was a therapist specializing in helping people struggling with substance abuse. My father was a counselor of troubled, incarcerated youth. My sister is a director of nursing at UW Medical Center. My wife Suzan has dedicated herself to serving our nation in Congress. I'm also so proud of our daughter for her work with Youth Eastside Services helping troubled youth. All these examples of service have helped reinforce in me a personal responsibility to serve to the greatest extent I'm able. This priority called me to help fix the Affordable Care Act website when it failed early on, and it's what drives my passion to serve the VA, our Veterans, and their families today.

I've spent most of my professional career at Microsoft. During that time, I had the honor to act as our executive sponsor for the Department of Defense (DOD) and to serve on the DOD's Defense Innovation Board, a board of tech professionals and academics that help solve some of the DOD's thorniest problems. In both capacities, I've experienced over and over the commitment, the intelligence, and the devotion that the men and women of the armed forces have for our nation, our citizens, and for each other. From these experiences

I've developed a deep-seated belief that Veterans, their families and their caregivers deserve our strongest possible commitment of support throughout their lives.

If confirmed, I'm excited to leverage my experience leading large software development projects and teams of similar size and complexity to help our nations Veterans, to leverage best practices in commercial software development to strengthen the IT processes at the VA, and to further enhance the already established culture of excellence.

I believe there's never been a time when IT excellence has been more important for the VA and for government overall. Information systems are at the heart of delivering critical services to our Veterans, especially now when modernization of critical systems is underway. The department is undertaking a large and complex replacement of their electronic health records system, updating their financial management and logistics systems, and making critical enhancements to their benefits systems to enable support of caregivers. Excellence in delivering on the core missions of the VA depend on success in these systems transformations. This is what drives me to step up to serve at this critical moment.

I've led similar, highly complex transformations in my time as a senior executive at Microsoft. I led the Microsoft Office organization during its transformation from on-premises software to a world-class cloud service. I led the transformation of our internal systems development teams into a world-class software development organization. I believe that this same transformation is possible and within our grasp, not just for the VA but for our entire government.

I do not come to this potential role thinking tech can solve everything or that commercial practices can be transferred as-is to a large and complex governmental organization like the VA. I do however believe that for such projects to be successful they must start with a clear vision, development plan, success metrics, and strong collaborative partnership with all stakeholders, including the members of Congress. Members play a critical role in oversight, enabling legislation, and critical Veterans support work - work that I've seen countless times in Suzan's offices.

I believe that OIT can be truly world class and can be a source of great pride for the VA, just as the healthcare and benefits provided to Veterans and their families by the department are today. This sense of pride can, in turn, further enhance the team's capabilities and their joy and satisfaction in the work that they do.

So, I'm here today both humbled and excited by the challenges that the Office of Information and Technology has in front of it. If confirmed, I commit to do everything in my power to deliver on the core mission of the VA, build a world-class technology organization, and use it to serve our Veterans, their families and caregivers.

Thank you.

Pre-Hearing Questions for the Record Responses
Nomination Hearing of Kurt DelBene to be
Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology
From Chairman Jon Tester

1. Why do you seek this position?

My father served in the United States Army in WWII, and my stepfather served in the US Navy. I grew up with the deepest respect for our military and especially for Veterans who have committed themselves to the difficult and often dangerous work of defending us all. I grew up in a family where service to others is a priority. I've always sought to give back, and our Veterans and their families deserve our greatest commitment of support. If confirmed, I believe I have an opportunity to use the skills I've developed leading large software development organizations to help transform how we build and operate software systems capabilities at the VA, which are an integral part of serving Veterans. I believe that the VA can serve as an example of how high functioning IT organizations can operate in government and serve our citizens.

2. Describe your management style and decision-making process.

I tend to be both deeply engaged in the details of the organization's work while enabling people to lead. I am very focused on what the vision is for the organization, what the top priorities are, how our current plans relate to those priorities, and whether we're making progress as measured by agreed upon metrics. Once we're all clear on the priorities, I like to know the details of the work, so I can think through how current work is or isn't focused and then help the team resolve difficult issues along the way. I've always had a regular rhythm of work reviews with teams, so we can discuss what's going well, what needs improvement, and what important issues needed to be decided on.

I also care deeply about members of the teams I lead. Is it clear what they need to do to succeed? Am I making sure that I help create an environment where they can do their best work? I also care deeply about diversity and inclusiveness. For us to do our best work and help Veterans to our greatest extent possible, we must represent the customers of the VA and the world around us. We must create an environment where people feel supported and included.

3. How would your prior subordinates describe your management style?

I tend to be very transparent about my leadership style, so I think my subordinates would describe my style similarly to how I described it in response to the previous question. In particular, I believe my prior subordinates would say that I create strong organizations that are vision led, connected with mission-focused product plans. We focus on clearly prioritized plans with metrics that describe real progress. Through our work reviews, they know that I'm very involved in the details. I tend to ask probing questions driven by logic. I think they also appreciate that I bring to their work an ability to look at things in new ways.

For example, I pushed our Business Operations team beyond executing the business operations they're responsible for to become a center of excellence for analysis.

I hope team members would acknowledge that I care deeply about the team overall and the members of the team individually. I like to understand how they're doing in their role and how they can grow and achieve their own goals. I believe in taking stock of the organization's capabilities and figuring out how we can transform the organization into an even more high functioning team over time – one where people love to work and are proud of the work they do.

4. If confirmed, what lessons can you bring from your experience inside and outside of government to help VA better organize and prioritize its IT needs? How can VA articulate those needs to Congress clearly so all parts of VA have the IT resources and staff needed to deliver IT projects to Veterans and VA employees?

As more dependencies are formed between organizational processes and IT systems, the IT function has become absolutely critical to achieving business objectives. This makes continuous collaboration with key stakeholders essential to ensuring that the systems support the core business processes well, and that the project remains focused on the most important priorities as the project progresses. While this may seem obvious, it's not how most IT has run traditionally, where they ask for requirements from stakeholder in more of an arm's length manner. IT these days requires a true partnership with stakeholders, and it requires IT to come to the table with an informed point of view on how processes can best be facilitated and optimized through strategic systems investments.

As the IT landscape has become more complex, it also makes it difficult for IT to be most effective without a deep understanding of the systems being developed in the organization. In an organization like the VA, systems development has typically been executed via contractors. Relationships with these contractors needs to move from one where requirements are handed off and results validated to one where full-time team members have an intimate understanding of the software project's strategy, technical details, and current progress. Without this, it's not possible to adjust quickly when complications arise, which they will.

The VA can best articulate the needs of the IT function to Congress and key stakeholders by being transparent about the work they are undertaking – the vision, priorities, project plans, timelines and metrics. This includes places where the team is facing challenges and must adjust plans in real time. This transparency can build greater trust that resources are being used responsibly and can build greater understanding of the level of resources required to meet the VA's objectives.

5. Do you agree it makes sense to do a thorough planning process and requirements development before an organization starts an IT project?

Absolutely. The up-front planning sets the project on the right course, getting it targeted on the highest priorities and scenarios and identifying all the dependencies. At the same time,

software projects must be agile and adjust as they make progress. It's not possible to understand absolutely everything going in, and it's key to be able to adjust plans as more is known and complications present themselves.

6. What are your top three observations for what makes an IT project successful? What are your top three observations for what causes IT projects to fail?

It's difficult to list all the factors that lead to project's succeeding or to pick just three that are the top factors. Having said that, here are three that are very important in my view:

- Having a clearly articulated vision, release plan and metrics of success: One needs to articulate the vision for the project in terms of end user outcomes. It needs to be specific rather than overly broad. The release plans need to be realistic and focused initially on the "Minimum Viable Product" – the specific capabilities that will result in a successful outcome. Metrics need to measure end user outcomes and be specific. They should wherever possible be measured in terms of how close we are to accomplishing a desired outcome. This avoids metrics that show progress without indicating how close to success the project is.
- Operating across the organization as a single well integrated team with strong collaborative relationships between stakeholders and the project development team: There needs to be shared priorities and deep coordination during the project's development and release. The stakeholders need to come together regularly to problem solve and not point fingers at each other when a problem arises. Instead, they should acknowledge the problem and come together to solve the issue.
- Using an agile development process: The vision, plans, and priorities for a project will often change over time. It is important to have a development process that acknowledges this and adapts as the project goes along. This allows the team to focus on incrementally delivering functionality that can be put to use right away rather than waiting for the ultimate manifestation of the perfect system.

There is an equally long list for why IT projects fail. Some important and common ones include the following:

- Lack of any of the above listed factors that make a project successful.
- Changing requirements over time, especially when all the stakeholders are not in-synch as requirements change, which has an impact on the project timeline and resources.
- Taking a "Big Bang" approach of dramatically changing the entire system all at once. The chance of a project failing goes up when you have a very large transformation and everything has to go right for the project to succeed. This source of failure is exacerbated by not following an agile development process, where changes can be made incrementally as the project progresses.

7. VA OIT has had an important supporting role in VA's Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) program. As you know, that program has significant challenges. Do you have any thoughts on what VA can further do to strengthen this program?

I only have a very top-level knowledge of the program details at this point. If confirmed, I will need to dig in and understand it deeply. However, there are a couple top-level observations from what I've heard so far based on my review of what is publicly available.

- The project seems to be significantly impacted by the dilemma of choosing a Commercial off the Shelf (COTS) project vs. creating a bespoke system that is designed to specifically meet the needs of the users. With a COTS system, there's an expectation that the human processes may need to change to effectively use the system. On the other hand, a bespoke system will more closely meet the workflows involved, but interoperability with other systems and ongoing system improvement can be problems. The VA seems to have chosen the COTS path, but it's unclear to me that everyone was onboard with how much adaptation would be required in how folks worked to use such a system.
- This may speak to the degree of collaboration and interlock with stakeholders that's taken place during the project. If confirmed, it'd be a top priority of mine to have all the project teams and stakeholders operating as one virtual team.
- I'd also like to understand what the project development relationship is with Cerner. As I've said in responding to other questions, I believe that having a deep understanding of the technical details of the system implementation are necessary for large IT projects to be successful. It also requires a strong trust relationship with outside contractors like Cerner. I'd like to see what the state of the relationship is and how it can be improved.
- The VA seems to be at a decision point on what the rest of the road to implementation looks like at Mann-Grandstaff and what the criteria are to move to the next location. I'd encourage us to balance incorporating lessons learned from the initial pilot with driving to support the continued rollout of the overall project.

8. VA has long been a leader in using telehealth to provide health care and other services to Veterans. Telehealth use increased exponentially during the COVID-19 pandemic. If confirmed, what steps would you take to assess VA's current telehealth services, and the Department's strategy for telehealth into the future including having the appropriate IT infrastructure.

I am not yet deeply immersed in the telehealth efforts at the VA but I'm excited by the promising results it's shown so far during the COVID pandemic. Telehealth can be particularly transformational for rural areas, like we have in Washington State. It can mean the difference between getting quality healthcare leading to a positive outcome and the patient becoming sicker. It can also transform the patient relationship, where they seek advice earlier, leading to a greater overall wellness and life quality.

We're only at the beginning of leveraging telehealth in the industry. People are building devices that integrate with a telehealth experience, such as blood pressure and blood sugar monitoring devices. A telehealth experience can be more automated and automatic, much as telemetry from so many devices are today. We need to push the industry to develop advanced capabilities to address the most important scenarios our Veterans face and figure out how to pilot advanced capabilities in a safe, secure way.

We also need to tackle the rural broadband issue. Rural vets are some of the most disadvantaged in terms of their ability to easily access care, and telehealth can be a key part of solving this problem, but it requires good connectivity for these communities to work effectively.

So overall, I'm excited about the early results, but we are very much at the beginning of the journey.

- 9. Since 2019 I have worked on a bipartisan basis on legislation known as the Department of Veterans Affairs Information Technology Reform Act to improve VA's ability to manage its IT portfolio, increase transparency, and further Congressional oversight. If this legislation is enacted into law, and if you are confirmed, do I have your commitment that you will work to aggressively implement its requirements?**

I'm not deeply immersed in the full scope of the legislation, but my understanding is that it mandates regular communications with Congress on the status and remediations on large IT projects and a strengthening of the role of the CIO, especially as it pertains to workforce issues, budgeting, investment management and emerging technologies.

Both of these touch on issues I'm passionate about – transparency and thinking strategically about the role of IT. While all legislation can move around a lot before it gets signed, I am very excited about working with you about these two topics, and my sense is our perspectives align. We should be transparent about the status and plans for our large IT projects, and we should think of IT as a strategic asset that requires setting a clear vision and execution plan.

- 10. As you know, while VA is attempting to deploy the Cerner EHR, in parallel VA must maintain and continue to improve the Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) system that VA medical and other personnel across the country rely on daily to deliver care and perform various critical activities. VistA can't be left without improvements for the seven or more years until EHRM's scheduled completion. If confirmed, do I have your commitment that you will advocate for continued smart development and maintenance of VistA?**

You absolutely have my commitment to make sure the critical needs of the VistA system are met. In my experience, most successful software projects are deployed over time and with a constant eye on the current needs of the organization, not just those served by the new systems. This has been my particular experience at Microsoft. Deployment of SAP S/4 HANA is a big challenge for large companies because SAP is so integral to their business processes. We explicitly found a solution where we could deploy it in parallel while making incremental changes to our R/3 infrastructure. I think there's an important similar balance to be found at the VA with the medical records system implementation.

Pre-Hearing Questions Responses for Kurt DelBene
Nominee to be Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology, Department of
Veterans Affairs
From Ranking Member Jerry Moran

1. **Please describe why you want to serve as CIO for VA.**

My father served in the United States Army in WWII, and my stepfather served in the US Navy. I grew up with the deepest respect for our military and especially for Veterans who have committed themselves to the difficult and often dangerous work of defending us all. I grew up in a family where service to others is a priority. I've always sought to give back, and our Veterans and their families deserve our greatest commitment of support. If confirmed, I believe I have an opportunity to use the skills I've developed leading large software development organizations to help transform how we build and operate software systems capabilities at the VA, which are an integral part of serving Veterans. I believe that the VA can serve as an example of how high functioning IT organizations can operate in government and serve our citizens.

2. **Are there any specific goals or outcomes President Biden wants you to achieve if you are confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Information Technology at VA?**

If confirmed, I would be honored to uphold what the President and Secretary McDonough have referred to as our most sacred obligation – caring for Veterans and their families when they return home. Especially now, I believe that the particular responsibilities and priorities of the Office of Information and Technology (OIT) align closely with the core priorities of the Department of Veterans Affairs overall because of the major and essential systems transformation efforts underway. For this reason, I believe my foremost responsibility is to help make these transformations successful. Because development and management of such systems will remain critical into the future, I believe another key responsibility is to enhance the capabilities of OIT and make it a truly world class IT organization. Most importantly, I would champion that the VA's IT systems be grounded in the Veteran experience and delivering results to improve their lives.

3. **Please describe your understanding of how you would work with the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, the Assistant Secretary for Enterprise Integration, and the head of the Electronic Health Record Modernization Office, if confirmed.**

I believe that close collaboration with all stakeholders and leaders and alignment on project priorities is at the very heart of successful IT projects, and the lack of these are at the heart of IT project failures. One must have agreement on the overall vision for such projects, the ranked priorities, expressed in terms of end user capabilities, and measures of success.

Getting this alignment is the most important goal among the leaders you reference. In addition, we need a regular cadence where the status of the projects can be reviewed, and critical decisions discussed and made.

4. What goals do you believe our country should seek to accomplish by providing benefits and care for veterans?

First and foremost, I agree with Secretary McDonough that everything the VA and our country does on behalf of Veterans should be determined by whether it increases Veterans' access to care and benefits and improves outcomes for them. I firmly believe that we as a nation have a responsibility to care for Veterans and their families who committed themselves to serve and protect our nation. Second, by providing these benefits and care, we should seek to make serving in the armed forces an appealing career choice, so that we can attract the very best.

5. What are some outcomes for veterans that you think should be measured in order to determine if those goals are being met or not?

If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary on his stated vision of ensuring all decisions and goals be made with the Veteran and family at the heart. I agree with the Secretary McDonough that all decisions the VA makes must ask the questions: "Does this increase outcomes and access for Veterans? Does this increase timely access to benefits for Veterans and their families?" These outcomes can be measured, along with the quality of the systems experience that support this critical work. The Department must also be user-friendly for the people using our services, and the users' satisfaction can be measured to assess how we're doing on this goal. The bottom line is that the VA's measured outcomes must ensure Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors are treated with the dignity and honor they deserve.

6. If confirmed, what would your top three priorities be as CIO?

If confirmed as the Assistant Secretary for Office of Information and Technology and Chief Information Officer, I would ensure that every day I focus on the following:

1. Ensure success of the major systems transformations underway at the VA, particularly the electronic medical records project
2. Build a world-class IT organization that delivers a highly capable systems infrastructure and is a desirable place to work. Build an effective model for collaborating with key stakeholders to create better project outcomes. Invest in organizational health to make VA OIT a career destination.
3. Deliver the key IT capabilities that all end users at the VA depend on with high end user satisfaction.

7. Based on your knowledge of IT at VA, where do you anticipate the biggest problems and challenges exist?

At present I only have a very top-level knowledge of the details of IT systems at the VA prior to confirmation. If confirmed, I will be eager to dig in and understand them deeply. Having said that, there are some potential challenges that may exist from what I've heard so far based on my review of what is publicly available:

- Working effectively with contractors to achieve the right project outcomes: In an organization like the VA, systems development has typically been executed via contractors. Relationships with contractors need to move from one where requirements are handed off and results validated to one where full-time team members have an intimate and ongoing understanding of the software project's strategy, technical details, and current progress. Without this, it's not possible to adjust quickly when complications arise, which they will.
- Implementing agile software develop practices, and cost-effective project completion: The vision, plans, and priorities for a project will often change over time. It is important to have a development process that acknowledges this and adapts as the project goes along. This allows the team to focus on incrementally delivering functionality that can be put to use right away rather than waiting for the ultimate manifestation of the perfect system.
- Alignment with all project stakeholders: There needs to be shared priorities and deep coordination during the project's development and release. The stakeholders need to come together regularly to problem solve and not point fingers at each other when a problem arises. Instead, they should act as a virtual team, acknowledge the problem and come together to solve the issue.
- Securing the VA from constantly evolving cyber threats

8. Please describe your approach to meeting the enterprise IT needs of a large federal agency, with a wide range of service lines and business requirements spread throughout the nation and overseas.

a. What are the key principles for success?

The department is undertaking a large and complex replacement of their electronic medical records system, updating their financial management and logistics systems, and making critical enhancements to their benefits systems to enable support of caregivers. I believe that excellence in delivering on the core missions of the VA depend on success in these systems transformations. I've led similar, highly complex transformations in my time as a senior executive at Microsoft. I believe that this same transformation is

possible and within our grasp, not just for the VA but for our entire government. For such projects to be successful they must start by doing the following:

- Establish a clear vision and rank ordered set of priorities that drive attention and resource allocation in the organization.
- Invest in the team and people. Establish an exciting charter for the team and career path for individuals.
- Leaders and team members should be deeply immersed in the details of their work, including technical details of software development projects.
- Have clear metrics that track to end user outcomes. “Embrace the red” – not all metrics need to be in a good place when you establish them. Reevaluate the metrics as you make progress.
- Extend this excellence to everything OIT does, including securing their environment and providing vital IT resources to the entire VA organization.

b. Please provide examples from your experience that illustrate the importance of these key principles in successfully meeting the IT needs of a large organization.

These are all principles that I lived by in working on developing strong organizations at Microsoft. Our own IT organization was more traditional when I began leading it. I believed in and rallied the team around the notion that the work we do is no different than the work done by the product teams at Microsoft and required the same set of capabilities to be successful. This resulted in an organization that was more focused and delivered better outcomes, drew talent from other parts of Microsoft, and cared deeply about career development, diversity and inclusion. The results of this transformation could be seen in our performance metrics and our team member satisfaction ratings.

c. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your approach or key principles, if at all?

COVID-19 has required the team to work effectively remotely. We made sure that our infrastructure scaled to support a high degree of remote work. We ensured that we had principles for where and how people worked that were fair and accomplished the goals of the organization. At the same time, the core principles didn't change, since they are largely independent of whether a large part of the organization is working in the office or remotely.

9. **Have you reviewed the Office of Information Technology organizational structure and are there changes that you believe need to be made?**

From my review of publicly available information, it's evident that OIT just went through a significant organizational change that created a single "Dev/Sec/Ops" organization where software development has been centralized and modern techniques such as agile development are being implemented. I think this is a step in the right direction. I think it's important for me to understand the organization more deeply before considering any additional organization changes.

10. **If confirmed, how will you ensure OIT can attract and retain the skilled workforce it needs to meet VA's IT needs?**

I believe that organizational development is a key priority for the organization, so that VA OIT can attract and retain the best talent. I believe it's important to get immersed in understanding the roles in the organization, what drives satisfaction and positive results in each of those roles, so that one can define what excellence is. We should also lean into the honorable mission of service to Veterans and their families, and energize the team on the importance of this mission and the clear impacts they make in accomplishing it.

I think it's also important to understand how these roles fit into the broader employment marketplace. The commercial sector can be a source of talent as well as a place where VA OIT employees move forward in their career. While this may seem counterproductive, we will draw more people into the organization if it's known to be a steppingstone in someone's career. Hand in hand with defining roles and career progressions is to have training that enables employees to grow in their capabilities, positively influencing organizational outcomes, and sets them up for taking the next step in their careers. I believe that by aligning how the VA OIT works with how modern commercial IT works, to the best extent possible, will enable the organization to be more effective and to be a destination where people want to develop their careers.

Senator Blackburn
Questions for the Record
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Hearing to Consider Pending Nomination
December 8, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.

(**Kurt D. DelBene**), Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Information and Technology)

- 1) *If confirmed, how do you plan to bring the Financial Management Business Transformation program, Electronic Health Record Modernization, and Supply Chain transformational efforts together to achieve success?*

If confirmed, I will have an opportunity to use the skills I've developed leading large software development organizations to help transform how we build and operate software systems capabilities at the VA, which are an integral part of serving Veterans. I believe what's most important is to make sure that each of these projects is run in a highly effective manner, accomplishing agreed upon goals for each project in a cost-effective manner. That would likely involve having common management and oversight approaches for each that represent industry best practices. While I'm not deep on the projects at this point, based on my cursory understanding so far, I don't know that this requires that these efforts be brought together, as the question asks. However, I believe my foremost responsibility to Veterans is to help make these transformations and additional priorities of the Office of Information and Technology (OIT) successful.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Information Technology Reform Act would require the VA to complete project management and oversight functions over IT programs. It also requires the VA to regularly report to Congress on the associated progress and challenges it is experiencing. The Department of Defense has similar reporting requirements which gives the chief information officer increased visibility and input into the projects.

- 2) *Do you believe it is necessary for Congress to have a report on resources spent on the project to date, planning expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year, scheduled completion date, any known deviations from schedule date, and what the IT project will deliver for veterans?*

I strongly believe it's important for Congress to be informed on the progress of the work of OIT. If confirmed, I'd like to work with members to make sure they have the information needed to understand our progress and make informed oversight and legislative decisions. I think the particular form of that information should be a point of discussion, so that it best meets the needs of Congress and Veterans who we aim to serve. We should be transparent about the status and plans for our IT projects, and we should think of IT as a strategic asset that requires setting a clear vision and execution plan.

- 3) *Do you believe that the VA should be required to provide a report as part of the yearly budget disclosing the department's one, five, and ten year IT spending needs, projections, and rationale?*

I believe that Congress would benefit from forward looking information on the budget needs for IT needs and for the rationale behind those needs. I think the particular form of that information is something that would be a good topic of discussion to ensure it best addresses the need. For example, forecasts for needs 10 years out would have a wide degree of error associated with them, particularly with the pace of technology evolution.

- 4) *Will you ensure that the VA will be transparent with Congress and the public regarding current and postponed IT spending on critical programs?*

I believe that transparency with all stakeholders including members of Congress and the public is critical to effective project management at OIT. I commit to providing that transparency, if confirmed.

I am concerned with the lack of key cybersecurity management elements at the VA, which leave us susceptible to a multitude of cyber-related threats. As VA continues modernization efforts, it is critical that these systems are adequately secure.

- 5) *Are you worried about foreign adversaries, such as China, breaching VA records and accessing patient information?*

Foreign actors including China represent a serious cyber threat to the VA, the rest of the government, and to the private sector. This includes the risk of breach of VA records and patient information. If confirmed, I commit to digging in to understand our cyber protection efforts and their status and to determine ways to increase the security of the department and its systems.

- 6) *What measures would you put in place to ensure VA servers are equipped to detect and block cyber-related threats?*

Protecting Veterans' and employees' data is a high priority for me. If confirmed, I would need to understand the measures already in place as a first effort. There are many measures that can reduce cyber threats. Foremost, frameworks like NIST and Zero Trust must be reviewed to develop a holistic view of the most important security measures to have in place, and a comprehensive scorecard to assess how we're doing against these measures must be tracked and be a foundational element of our approach. Measures that are important include the following: Ensuring Multi-factor authentication is in place for all devices that access department resources, ensuring all devices are safe by having anti-virus running and validating that they are running the most recent operating system software, making sure that networks are secure from intrusion, ensuring that servers implement "least privileged access", where access permissions are granted only to those that require them, and making

sure there are strong detection capabilities to ensure that intrusions are caught and remediated quickly. These are just some of the typical measures that must be in place to secure an organization like the VA. There are many others. Moreover, it is a fast-moving space where adversaries are continuing to innovate, and we need to always be on the forward foot in securing the VA's resources with new measures.

**Sen. Boozman
Questions for the Record
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
DelBene Nomination
12/08/21**

Questions for Kurt D. DelBene

1. Your statement to the Committee and the way in which you answered questions during your confirmation hearing, makes clear your dedication to serving the government, the Veterans Affairs Department, and most importantly our nation's Veterans. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure your prior work history with Microsoft will have no bearing on how you or your team shall evaluate or make final purchase decisions of IT solutions and services?

First and foremost, I will always keep the needs of Veterans as the primary goal that I'm focused on. More generally, I don't believe that my time at Microsoft will make me biased towards Microsoft solutions. There are many great software and services solutions from a broad array of vendors available in our industry. I will make it clear to my team that I believe that the best solution should be chosen, and I will personally make sure that objective criteria are used in all decision making.

Senator Sherrod Brown
Questions for the Record
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Nomination Hearing for Kurt DelBene
December 8, 2021

Question for Kurt DelBene:

1. *If confirmed, your office will need to manage evolving technology, replacing legacy infrastructure, and integrating various applications, and it will be necessary to recruit and retain a highly skilled workforce to carry out this mission. How will you address human capital and workforce issues? How will you ensure that you have the resources to build that workforce and upgrade VA's IT systems?*

People are energized to join organizations that they believe they can make contributions to, that provide them rewarding work, and that will help them grow in their careers and provide for their families. I believe the first priority for OIT is to develop a mission, vision and connected plans that are exciting and compelling in order to attract strong talent. From this core, the key roles that the organization is anchored around and their capabilities can be articulated. This allows people to understand what success in their role looks like and what their career path is. If confirmed, I will work with the team to articulate and understand our mission, vision, product plans, metrics of success, key roles and their responsibilities. We can build the organization around these and recruit talent from Veterans, from schools, and from industry to bring in the resources needed for the organization to be successful.

Much of this may be in place in some fashion, but my sense is there's an opportunity to move from a more traditional IT organization that is most common in the industry to one that is dynamic and deeply connected to the goals of the VA overall. There will be specific investments in human capital that will be required that will be required for such a transformation, but it starts with getting these basics right and compelling.

2. *With the pandemic, veterans have pivoted to using more online VA services, and with that comes additional risk from cyberattacks and cybercrime. If confirmed, how would you protect the privacy and personal data of veterans? And if there is a cyberattack or breach, would you commit to briefing the Committee about the nature and breadth of that attack?*

I agree overall that this is a critical issue given the growing dependence on online access by Veterans. With respect to briefing the Committee, if there is an attack, I would commit to doing so. It would be important to work with Committee staff to determine what sort of briefing would be most helpful.

Protecting Veterans' and employees' data is a high priority for me. If confirmed, I would need to understand the protections already in place as a first effort. There are many measures that can reduce cyber threats. Foremost, frameworks like NIST and Zero Trust Networking

must be reviewed to develop a holistic view of the most important security measures to have in place and a scorecard to assess how we're doing against these measures. Efforts that are important include the following: Ensuring Multi-factor authentication is in place for all devices that access department resources, ensuring all devices are safe by having anti-virus running and validating that they are running the most recent operating system software, making sure that networks are secure from intrusion, ensuring that servers implement "least privileged access", where access permissions are granted only to those that require them, and making sure there are strong detection capabilities to ensure that intrusions are caught and remediated quickly. These are just some of the typical measures that must be in place to secure an organization like the VA. There are many others. Moreover, it is a fast-moving space where adversaries are continuing to innovate, and we need to always be on the forward foot in securing the VA's resources with new measures.

3. *VA has relied heavily on contractors to develop IT systems, and in some cases led to program delays impacting veterans and their families. If confirmed, how would you manage these existing contracts to ensure that the contractors understand the software project's purpose, technical details, and meet those objectives? And how will you ensure that program timelines and objectives meet Congressional intent?*

I believe there's an opportunity to engage with contractors more deeply on the status and management of systems projects and to more deeply understand the technical details of those projects so that we can better guide them, adjust priorities, and ensure that projects better meet VA and Congressional goals. This involves getting into a regular rhythm with the contract development teams where we can walk through priorities, status, plans, and costs, providing feedback on all. This rhythm should involve senior leadership on a regular basis as well as all critical stakeholders, so we're all on the same page. This will also provide a richer, more regular data source for briefing Congress on the status of projects.

Sen. Moran
Questions for the Record
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Hearing on the Nomination of Kurt DelBene
December 08, 2021

Questions for Mr. Kurt DelBene:

1. *VA requested less funding for OIT in its FY22 budget request compared to last year. The average Federal Agency IT budget is roughly 9.8% of their Agency Discretionary budget; the VA's IT budget is less than 5% of overall discretionary spending. In an era of increasing demand for information technology, explain to me how you will be successful with such a small budget that is not keeping up with the growth and demand of the department, as well as a staff shortage of over 4000 IT Specialists?*

I appreciate your concerns about the OIT budget as a percentage of the Agency's discretionary budget. If confirmed, I believe it's important for me to review the budget details and understand whether it is adequate to support the critical work that OIT needs to do. I would welcome a discussion on this topic once I'm more informed. I also believe that it's important for the CIO to understand the budget in detail on an ongoing basis, so that intelligent funding decisions can be made on a daily basis. This is a practice I followed in all my work in the commercial sector.

2. *Over the past 2 years, VA and OIT have successfully delivered on some reasonably large programs, namely MISSION Act, Blue Water Navy Act, and Caregivers Act, to name some. But outside of those successes have been many failures. Would you please talk to me about what you consider root causes for IT failures and any dependency on funding, staffing, mission, and business owner involvement?*

There are a large number of factors that can cause IT projects to fail. Some of these include the following:

- Unclear vision, development plans, and success metrics
- The development team isn't in synch with all key stakeholders, including users, org leadership, and critical related functional teams like end user support.
- Taking on too much at once. Often projects that are designed to be a "Big bang" where a very large system is replaced and put into place in a non-evolutionary manner can fail and set a situation where a project is perceived to be "too big to fail" or the cost of changing plans in response to difficulties is very large.

- Related to this, projects that don't use an agile development methodology where progress is made in waves and the team can take stock after each wave fail because they go off course either technically or because priorities change or were unclear in the first place. This can be particularly dangerous with outsourced projects, which may be managed at arm's length.

3. *Electronic Health Record Modernization is the most critical effort VA is currently pursuing. Would you please describe to me the CIOs role and how you intend, with the cooperation of VHA and OEHRM, to deliver on EHRM?*

The Secretary announced a new organization structure for the EHRM project recently. I would like to assess and understand how leadership sees this team functioning and how I can have the greatest possible contribution to its success based on my experience.

4. *VistA will be around for another 10 years; how do you see OIT working with VHA to continue developing, modernizing, and enhancing VistA so that Veteran Health outcomes don't suffer during the new EHRM rollout?*

As you say, VistA will be around for some time still, and it's important to continue to address key end user requirements during that time. There will inevitably be changes required to meet new scenarios, respond to new and changed treatment regimes, cyber risks, standards, and other factors. We should continue to drive a process where the critical changes required to support a continued high degree of care are prioritized and implemented, until such time that VistA is fully decommissioned.

5. *Do you believe you will have enough staff and budget to support both the current OIT modernization efforts as well as the EHRM efforts?*

If confirmed, I commit to evaluating the staffing and budgeting for OIT and developing a well formulated plan that will provide the resources needed to carry out the mission of the Department supporting Veterans.

Sen. Murray
Questions for the Record
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Hearing to Consider the Nomination of Kurt D. DelBene to be Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs
for Information and Technology
12/08/2021

Questions for Kurt DelBene

1. VA continues to have many vital IT projects that need to be addressed in an efficient and timely manner. As technology continues to advance, the number of these projects will likely increase. There need to be clear lines of communication and transparency with Congress to ensure these projects do not fall behind. If confirmed, how will you ensure communication between VA and Congress is clear in order to keep current and future IT projects on track?

I believe that transparency with key stakeholders including Congress is critical to the success of OIT, and I commit to working closely with Congress to ensure that all information regarding the various IT projects and programs are shared with this committee, enabling the committee to perform the appropriate oversight and legislative leadership roles. If confirmed, I will work closely with Congress to determine the best way to accomplish reoccurring and transparent communications on IT operations.

2. As telehealth becomes more popular with veterans, VA needs to ensure veterans in rural areas have access to the technology required to receive care in this manner. As VA upgrades its IT infrastructure, how will you ensure the needs of rural veterans are being met?

This is an area that needs to be evaluated in support of Veterans obtaining important healthcare. I believe that no Veteran should be left behind in the digital divide, particularly when it comes to their healthcare. If confirmed, there are a number of potential actions that come to mind in improving the use of telehealth for rural users:

- We need to work with the Administration's rural broadband initiatives to ensure that those plans are informed by where the need is greatest for the VA.
- We need to look at the bandwidth to rural clinics to ensure it's adequate.
- We can address some of the need in part by deploying telehealth kiosks in rural locations where broadband is available.
- We should ensure that voice-only telehealth visits are as effective as possible
- We should work with the VA's telehealth software providers to ensure that they are as bandwidth efficient as possible.
- We should explore new modalities of telehealth that can help patients without the need for full broadband connectivity (e.g., cellular-connected medical devices)

3. President Biden's Executive Order on Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity calls for agencies to advance toward Zero Trust Architecture and move to secure cloud services. GAO has previously found VA has struggled to secure information systems and establish key elements of a cybersecurity risk management program. If confirmed, how will you implement Zero Trust Architecture and accelerate secure cloud adoption across the department?

I support the call for implementation of a Zero Trust Architecture at the VA. If confirmed, I need to analyze and understand the current state of VA's cyber security posture. Generally, the following are key investments critical to an IT infrastructure:

- Ensure that all devices are connecting with known users through technologies like Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)
- Ensure that the devices connecting to the network are healthy. Devices should be running management software and anti-virus software, and they should have the most recent operating system software and patches installed.
- Ensure that users connecting to systems have only those privileges that are required to perform their role (aka, "Least Privileged Access")
- Install strong network and systems monitoring software so that potential intrusions can be detected and remediated quickly.

Sen. Sinema
Questions for the Record
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Nomination of Kurt D. DelBene to be Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Information and Technology
12/07/21

Questions for Kurt D. DelBene

1. *It's important that the VA have effective performance management protocols so it can show its ability to meet its missions and improve where needed. What lessons have you learned in your private sector experience that will inform how you review and support VA's performance management strategy, if confirmed?*

I believe strongly in the connectedness of vision, plans, and metrics that measure success. They must be a connected triad. Metrics in particular should be both comprehensive, measuring progress on all key goals, but reduced to their smallest critical set to avoid data overload. Metrics should measure progress towards a clear goal as opposed to ones that will always seem to go "up and to the right". Seeing this isn't helpful unless you can see how far from the goal you are. Metric choices should focus on trouble areas as well. In my last team at Microsoft, we talked about "embracing the red". Metrics that are red shouldn't be avoided, and people shouldn't be blamed for a metric that's red. They highlight areas that need improvement. Once a metric has improved and is stable, one can consider new metrics that push the team to further improvement. Finally, in many cases, performance metrics like response time of a system need to measure not just the average responsiveness but also the "95% percentile" responsiveness to understand what poor experiences are still being felt, even if only by 5% of the users.

2. *In June 2019, the VA's Office of Information and Technology (OIT) launched the Decision Support Tool (DST) to fulfill key requirements of the MISSION Act's community care changes. The roll out of those programs did not go well according to test by US Digital Services (USDS), an independent governmental technology group. There are also ongoing challenges with the EHRM roll-out. How will you lead the VA to improve its processes for these critical technology modernization program working with the clinicians and other stakeholders that are critical to their success while also ensuring taxpayer dollars are well spent?*

For systems for which OIT has direct leadership responsibility, I would examine these projects directly and create a review cadence with project members and key stakeholders where we walk through each status in detail including performance metrics, key end user issues, features to be delivered and rollout timing. If confirmed, I would create a strong

collaborative working relationship with stakeholders and with outsourced contractors where everyone is on the same page on priorities and next steps. In places like EHRM where OIT doesn't have direct responsibility, I will work with those holding responsibility and with VA senior leadership to see how I can contribute as much as possible and best leverage my skillset from my deep industry experience.

3. *The VA rapidly expanded its telehealth footprint in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. If confirmed, how do you see your role in continuing to expand and improve telehealth programs, particularly for those more rural areas that might have access challenges due to limited broadband access?*

Providing Healthcare to Veterans is a vital role that VA offers supporting Veterans with their mental and physical health needs. I believe that no Veteran should be left behind in the digital divide, particularly when it comes to their healthcare. If confirmed, I will use this opportunity to work with VHA to have clearly aligned goals on what role telehealth can play and to develop action plans together to support those goals. That should include clear assessments of broadband capabilities in places of greatest needs, plans with the rest of the Administration to address those broadband needs, deployment of kiosks, education of users on how to use telehealth, and future technology plans that meet the highest unmet needs of our nation's Veterans.

4. *Both the VA Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office have found that the VA has inadequate cyber controls on its information technology. In fact, CRS tells us that the VA spends only 0.52% of its discretionary budget on cybersecurity, far less than DHS (3.81%), or Treasury (3.61%) by comparison. Can the VA do more with less or should Congress be doing more to prioritize cybersecurity in the VA's budget?*

If confirmed, one of my priorities will be to access and understand VA's cybersecurity strategy in detail to evaluate its adequacy and identify any further investments that need to be made. Overall, keeping the VA's IT infrastructure and Veteran information secure is one of the top goals of OIT.

Sen. Sullivan
Questions for the Record
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
On the Nomination of Kurt DelBene, to be Assistant Secretary for Information Technology
and Chief Information Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs
12/8/21

Question for Mr. DelBene

1. VA's new Cerner implementation schedule has the Alaska VA Healthcare System going live in July 2022, with many issues to be worked out before then. I know you won't run that program, but if confirmed you would have significant sway over its technical aspects, including appointing a deputy chief information officer to oversee it. I hope you would use that appointment to shake up the current strategy, not just add another layer of management.

Making the EHRM project successful is a critical goal for the VA. If confirmed, I look forward to understanding how I can assist the projects by leveraging my experience and skills to help move the EHRM program to a successful direction.

2. It seems like a basic problem with the Cerner contract is that VA expects one company's software to meet all its requirements, rather than allowing in multiple companies with the best products for particular needs. The absolute reliance on one company seems to be a lose-lose for VA and Cerner. Do you think that this reliance is a problem, and if so, how do you intend to address it?

If confirmed, I will work with the EHRM leadership to gain an understanding of the issues of the development of the program and the contract requirements. There are places where sole sourcing can work effectively, but it requires creating an oversight approach where team members are deeply knowledgeable about the work, its progress, and key issues being wrestled with. It's very hard to effectively manage a complex IT project without this level of oversight and resulting transparency, and I will encourage and work towards its adoption on the project.

**UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

**ROOM 412 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510
Telephone: (202) 224-9126**

**QUESTIONNAIRE
FOR PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEES**

The Rules of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs require that a Presidential nominee whose nomination is referred to the Committee submit, on a form approved by the Committee, a sworn statement concerning his or her background and financial interests, including the financial interests of the nominee's spouse and children living in the nominee's household. The Committee form is in two parts:

- (A) Information concerning the employment, education, and relevant background of the nominee, which is made public; and
- (B) Information concerning the financial and other background of the nominee, which is made public only when the Committee determines that such information bears directly on the nominee's qualifications to hold the position to which the individual is nominated.

Committee action on a nomination, including hearings or a meeting to consider a motion to recommend confirmation, shall not be initiated until at least five days after the nominee submits this form unless the Chairman, with the concurrence of the Ranking Minority Member, waives the waiting period. In order to assist the Committee in its consideration of nominations, the Committee requests that each nominee complete the attached Questionnaire for Presidential Nominees. The notarized original and any supplemental information should be delivered to:

Committee on Veterans' Affairs
United States Senate
Room 412, Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Attention: Chief Clerk

PART I: ALL OF THE INFORMATION IN THIS PARTa WILL BE MADE PUBLIC

1. Basic Biographical Information

Please provide the following information.

<i>Position to Which You Have Been Nominated</i>	
<u>Name of Position</u>	<u>Date of Nomination</u>
Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology and CIO, Department of Veterans Affairs	

<i>Current Legal Name</i>			
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>
Kurt	D	DeBene	

<i>Addresses</i>					
<u>Residential Address</u> (do not include street address)			<u>Office Address</u> (include street address)		
			Street: 3621 Evergreen Point Rd		
City: Medina	State: WA	Zip: 98039	City: Medina	State: WA	Zip: 98039

<i>Other Names Used</i>						
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>	<small>Check if Maiden Name</small>	<u>Name Used From</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)	<u>Name Used To</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)
Kurt	D	Myers			07/24/60	Approx 1971 (adopted by stepfather after father's death)
					Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Birth Year and Place</i>	
Year of Birth (Do not include month and day)	Place of Birth
1960	Akron, Ohio

<i>Marital Status</i>					
Check All That Describe Your Current Situation:					
Never Married	Married	Separated	Annulled	Divorced	Widowed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Spouse's Name</i> (current spouse only)			
Spouse's First Name	Spouse's Middle Name	Spouse's Last Name	Spouse's Suffix
Suzan	Kay	DelBene	

<i>Spouse's Other Names Used</i> (current spouse only)						
First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	Suffix	Check if Maiden Name	Name Used From (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)	Name Used To (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)
Suzan	Kay	Fine			Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>
Suzan	Kay	Oliver		X	Feb, 1962	Est <input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Children's Names (if over 18)</i>			
First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	Suffix
Rebecca	Ann	Holbrook	
Zachary	William	Fine	

2. Education

List all post-secondary schools attended.

<u>Name of School</u>	<u>Type of School</u> (vocational/technical/trade school, college/university/military college, correspondence/distance/extension/online school)	<u>Date Began School</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Ended School</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still in school)	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Date Awarded</u>
University of Arizona	University	8/78	5/82	BS	5/82
Stanford University	University	9/82	8/83	MS	8/83
University of Chicago	University	9/88	5/90	MBA	5/90
		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		

3. Employment

(A) List all of your employment activities, including unemployment and self-employment. If the employment activity was military duty, list separate employment activity periods to show each change of military duty station. Do not list employment before your 18th birthday unless to provide a minimum of two years of employment history.

<u>Type of Employment</u> (Active Military Duty Station, National Guard/Reserve, USPHS Commissioned Corps, Other federal employment, State Government (Non-federal Employment), Self-employment, Unemployment, Federal Contractor, Non-Government Employment (excluding self-employment), Other	<u>Name of Your Employer/Assigned Duty Station</u>	<u>Most Recent Position Title/Rank</u>	<u>Location</u> (City and State only)	<u>Date Employment Began</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Employment Ended</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still employed)
Non-Governmental	AT&T Bell Labs	Member of Technical Staff	Holmdel, NJ	05/1982	07/1988
Non-Governmental	McKinsey & Company	Associate	Los Angeles, CA	9/1990	2/1993
Non-Governmental	Microsoft	President	Redmond, WA	2/1993	12/2013
Governmental	Dept of Health & Human Services	Advisor to the Secretary	Washington, DC	12/2013	07/2014
Non-Governmental	Madrona Venture Group	Venture Partner	Seattle, WA	07/2014	03/2015
Non-Governmental	Microsoft	Executive Vice President	Redmond, WA	04/2015	09/2021

(B) List any advisory, consultative, honorary or other part-time service or positions with federal, state, or local governments, not listed elsewhere.

<u>Name of Government Entity</u>	<u>Name of Position</u>	<u>Date Service Began</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Service Ended</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still serving)
US Department of Defense	Defense Innovation Board Member	5/2019	2/2021 Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Present <input type="checkbox"/>
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4. Honors and Awards

List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, civilian service citations, military medals, academic or professional honors, honorary society memberships and any other special recognition for outstanding service or achievement.

None

5. Memberships

List all memberships that you have held in professional, social, business, fraternal, scholarly, civic, or charitable organizations in the last ten years.

Unless relevant to your nomination, you do NOT need to include memberships in charitable organizations available to the public as a result of a tax deductible donation of \$1,000 or less, Parent-Teacher Associations or other organizations connected to schools attended by your children, athletic clubs or teams, automobile support organizations (such as AAA), discounts clubs (such as Groupon or Sam's Club), or affinity memberships/consumer clubs (such as frequent flyer memberships).

<u>Name of Organization</u>	<u>Dates of Your Membership</u> (You may approximate)	<u>Position(s) Held</u>
Global Partnerships	2011-present (approx.)	Board Member
Partners in Health	2019-present (approx.)	Member of Board of Directors
Reed College	2012-present (approx.)	Trustee Board Member
University of Arizona	2019-present (approx.)	President's Advisory Board Member
University of Washington, Bothell	2016-2021 (approx.)	Advisory Board Member

6. Political Activity

(A) Have you ever been a candidate for or been elected or appointed to a political office?
 No

<u>Name of Office</u>	<u>Elected/Appointed/ Candidate Only</u>	<u>Year(s) Election Held or Appointment Made</u>	<u>Term of Service (if applicable)</u>

(B) List any offices held in or services rendered to a political party or election committee during the last ten years that you have not listed elsewhere.

None

<u>Name of Party/Election Committee</u>	<u>Office/Services Rendered</u>	<u>Responsibilities</u>	<u>Dates of Service</u>

(C) Itemize all individual political contributions of \$200 or more that you have made in the past five years to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity. Please list each individual contribution and not the total amount contributed to the person or entity during the year.

Committee Name	Receipt Date and Time	Amount
HILLARY FOR AMERICA	3/18/2016	2700
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	3/31/2016	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	4/15/2016	50
VAN HOLLEN FOR SENATE	4/21/2016	2700
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	4/29/2016	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	5/13/2016	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	5/31/2016	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	6/15/2016	50
DCCC	6/28/2016	23400
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	6/30/2016	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	7/15/2016	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	7/29/2016	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	8/15/2016	50
DNC SERVICES CORP./DEM. NAT'L COMMITTEE	8/17/2016	7300
HILLARY VICTORY FUND	8/17/2016	10000
HILLARY FOR AMERICA	8/17/2016	2700
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	8/31/2016	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	11/15/2016	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	11/30/2016	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	12/15/2016	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	12/30/2016	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	3/15/2017	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	3/31/2017	50

MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	4/14/2017	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	4/28/2017	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	5/15/2017	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	5/31/2017	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	6/15/2017	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	6/30/2017	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	7/14/2017	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	7/31/2017	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	8/15/2017	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	8/31/2017	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	9/15/2017	50
FRIENDS OF MARIA	11/2/2017	1000
DCCC	12/12/2017	10000
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	12/29/2017	50
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	1/31/2018	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	2/15/2018	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	2/28/2018	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	3/15/2018	208
LISA BROWN FOR CONGRESS	3/28/2018	1000
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	3/30/2018	208
ANGIE CRAIG FOR CONGRESS	4/6/2018	1000
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	4/13/2018	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	4/30/2018	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	5/15/2018	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	5/31/2018	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	6/15/2018	208

MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	6/29/2018	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	7/13/2018	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	7/31/2018	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	8/15/2018	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	8/31/2018	208
ADAM SMITH FOR CONGRESS COMMITTEE	9/7/2018	2700
DCCC	9/10/2018	10000
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	2/28/2019	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	3/15/2019	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	3/29/2019	2496
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	4/15/2019	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	4/30/2019	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	5/15/2019	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	5/31/2019	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	6/14/2019	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	6/28/2019	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	7/15/2019	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	7/31/2019	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	8/15/2019	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	8/30/2019	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	1/31/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	2/14/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	2/28/2020	208
BIDEN FOR PRESIDENT	3/4/2020	5600
BIDEN FOR PRESIDENT	3/4/2020	-2800
BIDEN FOR PRESIDENT	3/4/2020	2800
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	3/13/2020	208

MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	3/31/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	4/15/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	4/30/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	5/15/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	5/29/2020	208
GAEL TARLETON (WA State Candidate)	5/31/2020	500
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	6/15/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	6/30/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	7/15/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	7/31/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	8/14/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	8/31/2020	208
MONTANANS FOR BULLOCK	9/21/2020	2800
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	10/15/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	10/30/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	11/13/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	11/30/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	12/15/2020	208
FAIR FIGHT	12/17/2020	500
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	12/31/2020	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	1/15/2021	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	1/29/2021	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	2/12/2021	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	2/26/2021	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	3/15/2021	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	3/31/2021	208

MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	4/15/2021	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	4/30/2021	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	5/14/2021	208
PEOPLE FOR PATTY MURRAY	5/18/2021	2900
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	5/28/2021	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	6/15/2021	208
MICROSOFT CORPORATION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE	6/30/2021	208

8. Public Statements

(A) List any testimony, official statements or other communications relating to matters of public policy that you have issued or provided or that others presented on your behalf to public bodies or officials.

None

(B) List any speeches or talks delivered by you, including commencement speeches, remarks, lectures, panel discussions, conferences, political speeches, and question-and-answer sessions. Include the dates and places where such speeches or talks were given.

The only public speeches I've delivered or panels I've been on have been as part of my technical leadership role at Microsoft. All were focused on technology implementation issues and none involved matters of public affairs. A subset that I've been able to find the details to from my calendar going back to 2010 are presented below. Some of these might not be fully public but have large audiences including press, so I erred on the side of including them.

Date	Presentation
10/3/2010	Keynote at Microsoft Exchange Conference
10/19/2010	Panel Discussion on Microsoft Office 365 with co-workers Chris Capossela and Betsy Frost
2/8/2011	Microsoft – US Army Symposium Keynote
2/17/2011	Microsoft Information Worker Symposium Keynote
4/29/2011	Proctor and Gamble Goldmine Event
7/2011	Microsoft MGX and WPC Presentations
10/2/2011	Microsoft SharePoint Keynote Presentation
2/29/2012	Morgan Stanley Investor Conference
7/2012	Microsoft MGX and WPC Keynote Presentations
7/9/2012	Microsoft MGX Keynote Presentation
2/25/2013	Morgan Stanley Investor Conference Keynote
7/17/2013	Microsoft MGX Keynote Presentation
7/13/2015	Microsoft Worldwide Partners Conference Keynote
11/19/2015	Datascience and Society Conference Keynote
12/8/2016	Lessons from Healthcare.gov presentation to UVA Masters in Management of IT class
2/15/2017	Keynote address to Thyssen Krupp Leadership Council
3/8/2017	Montgomery Securities Summit Keynote
6/5/2017	Morgan Stanley Tech Innovation Summit Keynote
9/12/2017	Microsoft CIO Summit Keynote
9/19/2017	Smartsheet Users Conference Keynote
02/06/2018	Interview with head of University of Arizona School of Engineering, Jeff Goldberg as part of their speaker series.

3/21/2018	Statoil Performance Forum Keynote
9/25/2018	Microsoft Ignite Envision Conference Keynotes
10/23/2018	Microsoft Global CIO Summit Keynote
12/7/2018	University of Chicago GSB Alumni Meeting "Fireside Chat"
3/6/2019	Microsoft Digital Experiences Summit "Fireside Chat"
5/10/2019	Tech Talk to University of Chicago Booth School students
9/24/2019	Microsoft Global CIO Conference Keynote
10/22/2019	Microsoft Global CISO Conference Keynote
11/10/2019	MAS Fintech festival keynote
11/11/2019	Singapore – AmCham Roundtable Conversation
5/6/2020	Chicago Booth Distinguished Speaker Series with Dean Madhav Rajan
5/8/2020	University of Chicago Booth School of Business Distinguished Speaker Series
8/3/2020	HBS Microsoft Case Interview
9/14/2020	AWSP CEO Network Challenge Seattle Principal Program
10/5/2020	HLTH VRTL 2020 – recording (virtual conference on healthcare and technology)
10/8/2020	Austin Startup Fireside chat
10/22/2020	Defense CIO Roundtable
Spring, 2021	Joint discussion with Timo Elliot on transformation of workforce under COVID, re-presented in the Wall Street Journal
5/25/2021	VFI/ATF Virtual Summit
5/27/2021	OLT Spring meeting: Fireside Chat
6/17/2021	King County Vaccination Partnership Case Study Interview
6/25/2021	Distinguished Speaker: Kurt DelBene and HBS Long Duration Competitive Advantage Seminar
2019-2020 various	Public Proceedings of the DOD Defense Innovation Board

(C) List all interviews you have given to newspapers, magazines or other publications, and radio or television stations (including the dates of such interviews).

As with question 8B, the only interviews I've given have been in conjunction with technical matters related to my role at Microsoft Corporation. None involved matters of public affairs. A subset that I've been able to find the details to from my calendar is presented below:

Date	Interviews
1/31/2011	Times of India Interview on Office 365 and productivity
3/10/2011	Interview with Mary Jo Foley, ZDNet
3/10/2011	Interview with Dan Macsai, Fast Company
3/11/2011	Interview with David Kirkpatrick, The Daily Beast
3/11/2011	Interview with Steven Levy, Wired.
5/11/2011	Press interview with Handelsblatt

5/12/2011	Press interview with BBC Online
5/12/2011	Press Interview with Daily Telegraph
6/8/2011	Interview with Nick Windfield from Wall Street Journal
6/8/2011	Interview with Greg Lamm from Techflash
6/8/2011	Interview with Bill Rigby from Reuters
6/8/2011	Interview with Nick Easton, Seattle P-I
6/8/2011	Interview with Sharon Chan from Seattle Times
6/9/2011	Interview with Information Week
6/27/2011	Interview with CNBC
6/27/2011	Interview with Bloomberg
6/28/2011	Foxbusiness Interview on Microsoft Office's cloud transition
10/5/2011	Interview with Norwegian Press Finansavisen
11/29/2011	Interview with Bloomberg
12/7/2011	Wired Magazine Interview (with Satya Nadella)
7/9/2012	Interview with Jay Greene, CNET
7/11/2012	Forbes Interview
2/25/2013	Interview with Steve Jones of Dow Jones
4/10/2013	Interview with Matt Warman of Daily Telegraph
04/10/2013	Interview with Fiona Graham of BBC on Microsoft Office
4/13/2013	Interview with VG (Norway Newspaper)
1/29/2014	Wired Magazine Interview on the turnaround of Healthcare.gov
1/31/2014	Kaiser Health News interview on turnaround of Healthcare.gov
11/4/2015	Trends, Growth, and Corporate Strategy – Interview with Ron Markazich of Microsoft, published on our internal blogcast Channel 9
11/11/2015	Interview with Financial Times
8/10/2017	Interview with Dr. Paul Kiestra, The Economist Intelligence Unit
10/11/2017	Bloomberg Interview on Cloud transition, VR, and Microsoft deals
8/15/2018	Interview with Jeremy Marin of LeMonde
2/9/2019	Computing In the Age of AI book interview
10/28/2019	Tony Boyd/The Australian Financial Review
11/7/2019	PR: Interview with Masahiro Nakagawa, Toyo Keizai
6/12/2020	McChrystal Group Interview on my career

9. Agreements or Arrangements

See OGE Form 278. (If, for your nomination, you have completed an OGE Form 278 Executive Branch Personnel Public Financial Disclosure Report, you may check the box here to complete this section and then proceed to the next section.)

As of the date of filing your OGE Form 278, report your agreements or arrangements for:
(1) continuing participation in an employee benefit plan (e.g. pension, 401k, deferred

compensation); (2) continuation of payment by a former employer (including severance payments); (3) leaves of absence; and (4) future employment.

Provide information regarding any agreements or arrangements you have concerning (1) future employment; (2) a leave of absence during your period of Government service; (3) continuation of payments by a former employer other than the United States Government; and (4) continuing participation in an employee welfare or benefit plan maintained by a former employer other than United States Government retirement benefits.

<u>Status and Terms of Any Agreement or Arrangement</u>	<u>Parties</u>	<u>Date</u> (month/year)

10. Lobbying

Have you ever registered as a lobbyist? If so, please indicate the state, federal, or local bodies with which you have registered (e.g., House, Senate, California Secretary of State).
No

11. Testifying Before the Congress

(A) Do you agree to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress upon the request of such Committee? Yes

(B) Do you agree to provide such information as is requested by such a committee? Yes

