

KEITH KELLY, NOMINEE TO BE THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR VETERANS'
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KEITH KELLY
NOMINEE TO BE THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
FOR VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
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Good Morning Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr and distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and for considering my nomination to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training. Your commitment to our Nation's veterans, transitioning service members and their families is inspiring.

I would also like to thank Senator Tester for his gracious introduction and for his unwavering support and friendship over the years. As many of you know, Senator Tester is committed to serving veterans and their families in Montana and the nation. He has been an outstanding advocate for our state. Thank you, Senator.

I am humbled and honored by President Barack Obama's nomination and the confidence both he and Secretary Hilda Solis have shown in me. President Obama and Secretary Solis are committed to ensuring that the men and women who serve this country have the employment support, assistance and opportunities they need and deserve to successfully transition to the civilian workforce, and find and secure meaningful careers. If confirmed, it will be my honor and privilege to work with this Committee to achieve that goal.

During the past few days, I have been privileged to meet with many of you and your staff and have received invaluable guidance and insight into the Committee's priorities and concerns. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing this dialogue on an ongoing basis.

While they could not be here today, I would like to thank my family for their love and support. We have a long history of service in our family. My wife, Norma Jean, has been the backbone of our family. She cared for our family while I served with the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam. I am grateful to her and all of the other military families that serve our country. Her father, Joe Walsh, served in the U.S. Merchant Marines during World War II. I would like to thank my children, Keith, Shannon, and Conan and Kevin (deceased). My oldest, Keith Joseph, has made a career as a service member with the Montana National Guard and has served in Iraq. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Governor Brian Schweitzer for his service to the great state of Montana and his support of me as Commissioner of the Montana Department of Labor and Industry. They have all played a major role in my being here today.

MILITARY SERVICE

During the Vietnam War, I served with the 101st Airborne Division as the Sergeant in charge of an infantry squad and later a platoon. We operated in the field with daily reconnaissance sweeps and nightly ambushes. We conducted combat assaults both in the jungle and on fire-support bases. It was through these activities that I honed my leadership abilities and earned my Combat Infantryman Badge and Bronze Star.

When I returned home from my service with the Army, my family and I, like most military families, faced the challenge of my transition from a military combat life to my role as father, husband, and part of the American workforce. This period was the most difficult time in our young marriage, for our family and for my professional career. At that time, there was very little support or assistance for transitioning service members or their families. As a result, the transition was unnecessarily difficult and we had to navigate these challenges largely by ourselves.

Today, thanks to the dedication of the people in this room and many others in Congress and throughout the federal government, significantly more resources are available to support service men and women with this transition. However, we can and must do more. President Obama and Secretary Solis are committed to serving our servicemen and their families as well as they've served us by providing them with the support they need and deserve to successfully transition to the civilian workforce and find and secure meaningful careers. If confirmed, I pledge to do my best to ensure that the 1.5 million service members expected to transition out of the military over the next five years, are not alone. I will work every day to fulfill the promises of the President and the Secretary to provide them with the best services and benefits our nation has to offer.

PUBLIC SERVICE

After returning home from Vietnam, I used my GI benefits to attend Montana State University and graduated with masters' degrees in Agricultural Economics and Economics. I then returned to public service and have dedicated the past thirty-five years of my professional career to this endeavor. I believe in bipartisanship and have worked for and with Republicans and Democrats throughout my career. I served as the Director of the Montana Department of Agriculture for six years under a democratic governor and spent seven years as the Director of the Arizona Department of Agriculture under a republican governor. Then, as now, state and federal governments faced difficult issues and, if confirmed, my experiences overcoming those obstacles will inform my work at VETS. For instance, in 1994 we faced significant revenue shortfalls. My agency experienced a 20% reduction in our budget. However, I succeeded in making difficult decisions and meeting the reduction goals and was singled out by the State Department of Administration for my excellent management abilities.

It is in my current position as Commissioner of the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, that I have become more engaged with labor and veterans' programs. As chair of the Veterans' Affairs Committee of NASWA (National Association of Workforce Agencies) from 2008-2010, I interacted with and worked on many of the programs administered by VETS. During my tenure,

the Committee evaluated these programs and submitted recommendations to the NASWA Board to improve the employment and training services for America's Veterans.

VISION FOR VETS

Every day, we are reminded of the tremendous sacrifices made by the members of the U.S. Armed Services, National Guard and Reserve. They leave their friends, families and careers behind to defend our freedoms around the world. These brave men and women deserve a hero's welcome and a chance to utilize their unique skills to help rebuild our economy when they return home. Yet, all too often, those who have given so much for America face a difficult transition back to civilian life and struggle to find a job worthy of their talents. President Obama and Secretary Solis have made a commitment to provide the men and women who serve this country and their families with the employment support, assistance and opportunities they need and deserve to find and secure meaningful careers. If confirmed, I would work with this Committee, Congress, my fellow agencies at the Department of Labor and within the Administration as a whole to fulfill this commitment.

In particular, I would strive to achieve the following goals:

(1) Improve outreach to service members, veterans and stakeholders to ensure they are aware of and have access to the programs and services available to help them achieve their employment and career goals;

(2) Sustain and bolster intensive employment services to those with significant barriers to employment;

(3) Fully implement and continuously improve the redesigned DOL Transition Assistance Program (TAP), continue to partner with the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, Homeland Security and others to by implementing the redesigned DOL Employment Workshop as part of comprehensive effort to seamlessly transition service members, Guard and Reserve members and their families from active duty to civilian life; and

(4) Increase and enhance VETS ability to measure and report on the impact of our programs by improving data collection and reporting. In conclusion, if confirmed, I will work closely with you, with the incredible VETS team and with our partners and stakeholders to provide veterans, transitioning service members and their families with the best possible resources and services to

enable their success in today's economy. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to veterans and for considering my nomination. It would be a privilege and an honor to serve our nation's veterans, transitioning service members and their families.

I appreciate having the opportunity to testify before you today and am happy to answer any questions you may have.