

Coral Wong Pietsch, Nominee for Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims

Opening Statement of Coral Wong Pietsch  
Nominee for Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims  
United States Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
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Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

Chairman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and distinguished Members of this Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is an honor to be a nominee to serve as a Judge on the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. I want to thank President Obama for the confidence he has shown in me by nominating me.

I would like to thank my husband, Professor James H. Pietsch, for his unconditional support and love. He has been a wonderful partner and advisor in our lifetime of public service together. I would also like to recognize other members of my family and my friends in this room today, several of whom travelled far to be with us.

My entire legal career has been in public service - in a variety of positions - federal government and state government, military and civilian. I am extremely proud to be a veteran having served in the military on active duty and in the Reserves.

As a Deputy Attorney General for the State of Hawaii, I learned the depth to which State decisions had on the public at large, the consequences, intended or otherwise, of such decisions and the privilege of witnessing the democratic process at work. I believe that this experience will serve me well as a Judge and remind me to consider the impact of each decision not only on the individual but for its precedential value.

As former Chair of the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission, I know and appreciate the importance of making sure that the processes and procedures in place are thorough, timely, and responsive. This serves and benefits all parties to the process. This too will serve me well if confirmed to the Court.

As an Army civilian attorney I have had the opportunity to work closely with the Military ensuring that our Military is trained and equipped to accomplish the missions assigned to them. This, along with my military service and close affiliation with other veterans, including my husband, my brothers and my father-in law, gives me the additional background helpful to understand many of the circumstances involving our veterans.

I am most proud of my service as a member of the United States Army - from my service in Korea as a young Captain on active duty to my service in the Army Reserve as a General Officer

in the United States Army Judge Advocate General's Corps. Over those years, I had the opportunity and the honor to observe and to work with thousands of my fellow American citizens in uniform.

I know what it is like to serve in a combat zone and I know what it is like to have a family member in harm's way. In 2007 at the height of the Surge, I volunteered to serve, as a Department of Defense civilian in Iraq. I was seconded to the State Department and served for one year on a Provincial Reconstruction Team. I served side by side with members of the military, sharing experiences, hardships, and accomplishments. I saw firsthand what conflict is like, how individuals react under extreme stress, and the lasting effects service in a combat zone can have on individuals. My husband, himself a military veteran and an Army retiree, also volunteered to serve during the surge in Iraq in his capacity as a professor of law. He was invited to serve as a Special Advisor to the Multi National Force-Iraq Law and Order Task Force and was stationed at a Forward Operating Base where he served with members of all branches of the U.S. military. This experience has given me a much deeper appreciation for the sacrifices made by those serving our country and for the need to address the needs of those who are experiencing difficulty due to their service.

It has been a great honor and a privilege for me to serve our country and it would be a great honor and a privilege for me to continue my service as a Judge on the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

In closing, I want to thank the Committee for the attention it has given to my nomination. If confirmed, I pledge my very best efforts in executing the duties of a Judge on the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.