

Roger W. Baker, Assistant Secretary-designate of Veterans Affairs

Opening Statement of Roger W. Baker
Assistant Secretary-designate of Veterans Affairs
Before the
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
United States Senate
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Thank you Chairman Akaka, Senator Burr, and Distinguished Members of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. It is an honor to appear before you today, and to have been asked by Secretary Shinseki and President Obama to serve our nation's veterans.

I am a technologist and a technology manager. I attended one of our country's finest universities, and have worked for some of our country's best companies. Most of my professional career has been in the private sector, where I have had the opportunity to work at the forefront of high-technology industries including software development and Internet banking.

While many of my friends and members of my family have served in our Country's military, I reached military age during a time of peace. I have been blessed throughout my life to live in the comfort and security made possible by the sacrifices of our nation's veterans. I was honored to accept the President's nomination to work for Secretary Shinseki and Deputy Secretary Gould, and, if confirmed by the Senate, to use my skills to serve the veterans whose sacrifices have made the good life I lead possible.

The Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology at the Department of Veterans Affairs is a challenging position. VA has faced a number of highly public technology challenges over the last few years, including the loss of veteran's information and failed systems development programs. While the consolidation of IT assets completed over the last two years, provides a starting point for addressing those challenges, the road ahead is long and unlikely to be incident free. If confirmed, I recognize that I will have the opportunity for many "bonding opportunities," as we say in the private sector, with the members of this committee. Mr. Chairman and members of this committee, I commit to you that you will find me earnest, open, and honest when those "opportunities" arise.

President Obama and Secretary Shinseki have expressed a compelling vision of a 21st Century VA;

- a VA that delivers pro-active, efficient services to veterans where, when, and how they want them;
- a virtual lifetime electronic record that supports a seamless transition from service member to veteran;
- an electronic VA that uses all the information available to it to maximize benefits and minimize waiting times and backlog;
- a transformed VA that turns the veterans' experience from one of delay to one of delight.

To achieve the President's and the Secretary's vision, VA must have a strong information technology capability. The VA IT organization must be able to reliably develop and operate the technology solutions that will enable the transformation of VA business processes.

There is no easy path, no simple answer, and no short-cut solution to creating a strong IT capability at VA. Achieving this will require hard work, disciplined management, and honest communications. But, with the IT consolidation as a starting point, I believe that VA can achieve a substantial strengthening of its IT capabilities. My guiding vision is that VA, and the veterans we serve, should have the best IT organization in government.

In conclusion, if this committee chooses to confirm me, I am committed to doing my utmost to transform the Department into a 21st century organization, focused on the nation's veterans as its clients, and providing them with the level of service that they have earned through their service and sacrifices for our country. Thank you.