

**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 nations 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 nation's 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.