

**Prepared Statement of Tanya Bradsher
Nominee to be Deputy Secretary,
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs
United States Senate**

May 31, 2023

Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Moran, and distinguished members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today, and for your dedication to Veterans. And thank you, Senator Duckworth, for that kind introduction.

I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude to my family, friends, colleagues, and mentors: To my late father, Sergeant First Class Vaughn Keene, and my mom, Linda Keene: you have always been my guiding lights. To my husband of 25 years, Retired Colonel John Bradsher, and to our three daughters, Charlotte, Catherine, and Christine: your love and unwavering support as we have served in Colorado, Korea, Pentagon and both of our deployments to Iraq mean everything to me. And to my late grandpas and great-grandpa, who served in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War: your service and sacrifice will never be forgotten.

As a fourth generation Army soldier, it is a true honor to be nominated by President Biden and Secretary McDonough to serve as Deputy Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our mission at VA is to care for those who have served in our nation's military, and for their families, caregivers, and survivors. I know the importance of this mission firsthand – not only because I've served as VA's chief of staff for the past two years, but because I've lived it. I've seen what it looks like when one of my fellow soldiers transitions out of the military and gets the support they deserve from VA how they live happier, healthier, more-fulfilled lives.

I've also seen what it looks like when that doesn't happen – with my own dad, who didn't get the support he needed and who, because of that, never quite found his way after 22 years of honorable service. Simply put, I know that VA can make all the difference in the world for our nation's heroes. I know that it's VA's job to ensure that no Veteran ever slips through the cracks. And I promise you that if I'm confirmed as deputy secretary, I will do everything in my power to ensure that every Veteran gets the world-class care and benefits they deserve.

Fortunately, throughout my life, I've been blessed with opportunities and experiences that have helped prepare me for this role: During my time at the VA, I know what it takes for VA to deliver more care and more benefits to more Veterans than ever before.

From my 27 years of service in Congress, the military, and the executive branch – under Republican and Democratic leadership – I've come to understand the critical nature of the partnership between the Hill and VA. And from my deployment, I've even seen firsthand the importance of the PACT Act. I was exposed to burn pits in Iraq, and I'm so grateful that – because of you – Veterans' toxic exposures are now recognized and cared for.

The bottom line is, during each of those experiences, I've strived to lead with compassion and integrity – creating teams that perform well under pressure and, above all else, deliver. And that's exactly what I hope to do as deputy secretary: deliver for Veterans.

To that end, I have three primary goals if confirmed. First, I will focus on transition. We need to ensure that our military service members have access to all the tools they need before they depart the service.

Second, I will ensure that we continue to build an electronic health record system that improves care for Veterans – and that we only deploy it when fully ready. And third, I will continue to build or rebuild trust with Veterans. I want to ensure that VA is reaching untethered Veterans – Veterans who have never come to VA before – and getting them care and benefits, including through the PACT Act.

As deputy secretary, I would do all of that and more with one north star in mind – the same north star that Secretary McDonough set forth when he was confirmed to fight like hell for Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. Because they deserve the very best.

Thank you again for considering my nomination, and for your partnership. I look forward to your questions.