

**STATEMENT OF RICHARD TOPPING
NOMINATED TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR MANAGEMENT
AND
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Thank you Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Blumenthal, and distinguished members of this committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is a profound honor to be nominated for the role of Assistant Secretary for Management and Chief Financial Officer for the Department of Veterans Affairs. I am deeply committed to the mission of the VA and, if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to ensure that our veterans, families, caregivers and survivors receive the care and benefits that they have earned.

I am grateful to President Trump and Secretary Collins for their confidence in me. I am grateful to the members of this Committee, for considering me to serve our great Nation alongside the men and women who are dedicated to delivering on one of America's most sacred promises.

Over the last few of weeks, I have had the opportunity to meet with several members of the Committee and your staffs. I have appreciated the direct, candid input and guidance about your priorities and opportunities for how we can continue to fulfill our shared commitment to veterans, their families, survivors and caregivers. Our meetings were an affirmation of the singular importance of the mission, and the critical role to which I will be entrusted, if confirmed.

I am an Army veteran. And for the past 20 years, which is all of my adult life after completing my military service, I have been a beneficiary of the VA. I have grown up with VA as a constant support and resource. VA has provided for me, and my family, in ways both small and large. From simple primary care check-ups and prescriptions refills, to the VA home loan that allowed me to purchase our family home, to the programs that will be there for me as I age and my needs may become more complex. Just about the only thing in my life that has not changed over the past 20 years is the VA, which has, is, and will be there for me and my family.

But it is not just me. My grandfathers, the first in their families to receive college educations, did so through the GI Bill. Both were WWII veterans, one Navy, the other Army, so just about the only thing they would agree on was the importance of the VA in giving them their first chance to succeed after the war. My younger sister, who became life-threateningly ill in Iraq, received almost all of her post-military care and support from VA. And while she ultimately passed away from complications related to her illness, my family and I personally experienced the life sustaining care VA provided to her. Finally, the newest VA enrollee in my family is not my son. He is too young and, I fear, with his early aptitude for engineering, may also be headed to the Navy. No, my family's newest VA enrollee is my father. A Vietnam era Air Force veteran, he has both Medicare and private coverage from my mother's retirement as a public school teacher. However, even with that coverage, he still struggled to find specialized hearing care related to his military service with jet engines. So he turned to the VA. He applied, was rated, enrolled, and received incredible specialty care in a matter of months. It was care that only the VA could provide. The commitment our nation made to my father decades ago, was there when he needed it. As it has been for me, as it was for my grandfathers, and as it is for millions

of other veterans. It is for those veterans, their families, survivors and caregivers – as well as my own – that I seek to serve.

While VA has cared for me, I have been lucky in my career to be able to care for others. For more than two decades, I have had opportunities to work in government, and in the private sector, with the Nation's largest healthcare programs. Those include Tricare, Medicare, Medicaid, Marketplace, and VA's own Community Care. All of these programs are complex, funding can be difficult, capabilities often lag requirements, and the programs must constantly evolve to meet the needs of the individuals they are intended to serve. That work can often be financially, operationally, and politically challenging. But through those experiences, I have developed a strong understanding of the complexities and responsibilities involved in leading large organizations and managing complex financial systems, which are often inter-related, but rarely inter-operable.

The more critical an organization's mission, the more critical its accountability. As CFO, I will use all my experience, skills, and leadership capabilities to coordinate and enhance VA's financial systems, ensure that taxpayer dollars are used effectively and transparently, and to maximize financial operations capabilities across the agency. My focus will be on enhanced financial reporting, improving budget forecasting and management, and ensuring the continued modernization of VA's financial infrastructure and technology.

If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary, this Committee, VA's incredible career staff, my fellow appointees, and the many other stakeholders who have embraced the responsibility to care for veterans. I am personally honored to have the opportunity to be part of an organization that has done so much for me and my family.

May God bless all those who have fought and sacrificed for this great Nation. I am forever grateful. Thank you Mr. Chairman. I am prepared to respond to any question from you and the Committee.