

**TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF
TANYA J. BRADSHER
TO BE DEPUTY SECRETARY,
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE
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FIRST SESSION

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 31, 2023

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 3 p.m., in Room SR-418, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Jon Tester, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Tester, Murray, Brown, Blumenthal, Sinema, Hassan, King, Moran, Cassidy, Blackburn, and Tuberville.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JON TESTER

Chairman TESTER. Good morning. I want to call this hearing to order to examine the qualifications of the President's nominee to serve as Deputy Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Ms. Bradsher, I want to first acknowledge your service to this country, both in uniform and in government service. This includes your national security and public engagement work at the White House, your public affairs work at the Defense Health Agency, and at the Department of Homeland Security, and your tenure supporting our Nation's veterans at the VA.

I am especially proud to welcome you before our Committee as the first woman nominated to this top position, a crucial moment for our Nation's veterans and our country.

Today we will determine whether you are the right person to be the VA Deputy Secretary. If confirmed, you will have specific accountability to manage several large programs, including the big one, electronic health records, which has been an area of major concern of this Committee, and I think you know that. You also will have broad responsibility for strengthening the DoD-VA collaboration as the agency works to implement the PACT Act.

In your role as Chief Operating Officer you will run the day-to-day operations of the Department, a position for which you have prepared by serving as the VA's Chief of Staff. I expect the Committee is going to want to know what you have learned in this role, how you have helped improve the delivery of health care and benefits to veterans, and your plans for the Department moving forward. And while the electronic health record will take up a good portion of your time, VA needs a leader who will not lose sight of

the other critical management responsibilities and service delivery functions of the Department.

The bottom line is the VA needs a Deputy Secretary who will improve collaboration and communication across the Health Benefits, Cemetery Administration, and Chief Operating Officer, all while ensuring those three entities are meeting the needs of veterans and their families.

I hope your answers to the members' inquiries on these matters will help this Committee make the determination whether you are the right person to be confirmed as Deputy Secretary. I very much look forward to our dialogue today, and I want to thank you for your willingness to serve in this very, very important role.

With that I will turn it over to Senator Moran for his comments.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JERRY MORAN

Senator MORAN. Chairman Tester, thank you very much. Ms. Bradsher, welcome. I will start by saying how much I appreciate the many years you have spent in service to our country, particularly in the United States Army. I am grateful for, since leaving the Army, that you have spent your time serving in the White House and the House of Representatives and now the Department of Veterans Affairs.

On this Committee we know that military service is family service, and in some way high-level government service is family service as well, and so I also want to recognize your mother Linda, your husband John, and your three girls, Charlotte, Catherine, and Christine. Thank you all for being here. It was nice to shake most of your hands. Thank you.

The role of Deputy Secretary at the Department of Veterans Affairs is a tremendously important one. The Deputy Secretary serves as the VA's Chief Operating Officer and leads the electronic health record modernization effort, which we have needed leadership and which we have been working on for a long time. That project is at a critical juncture now.

If confirmed to this position, Ms. Bradsher, millions of veterans, caregivers, survivors, and dependents across the globe will be counting on you to deliver the timely and high-quality health care, benefits, and services that they need. Hundreds of thousands of VA staff members will be counting on you as well to provide a high-performing, safe, and accountable place for them to come to work each and every day.

I want to hear this afternoon how your experiences prepared you to take on these responsibilities and how you would achieve success where your would-be predecessors have struggled. I also want to hear how you would make certain that the actions you take and decisions you make, if confirmed to this position, would put the needs and interests of veterans above any other consideration. That includes making certain that VA officials from the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary on down to the newest entry-level staffer in a VA medical facility, regional office, or cemetery follow both the letter and the intent of the laws of Congress, and that they are responsive and transparent to veterans and their families and with this Committee and with our colleagues in the Senate and House.

I will be listening to your testimony this afternoon, and I know my fellow Committee members as well. Thank you again for being here and for your willingness to be considered for this role.

Chairman Tester, I yield back.

Chairman TESTER. I would like you to stand and raise your right hand as you receive the oath of office.

Do you, Tanya Bradsher, solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give before the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Ms. BRADSHER. I do.

Chairman TESTER. Let the record reflect the nominee answered in the affirmative.

Hang on for just a second.

Okay. Well, we are going to do this a little differently than what we had planned. The good Senator from Illinois, Senator Duckworth, will be here to introduce you, but she is going to introduce you after you get done with your opening statement.

You may proceed.

And by the way, I would love to have you, if it is not in your opening remarks, introduce your family so we know who is who. With three girls I get the names confused.

STATEMENT OF TANYA J. BRADSHER

Ms. BRADSHER. Absolutely, Senator. I have with me my mom, Linda Keene, my daughter, Charlotte Bradsher, my husband, John Bradsher, my middle daughter, Catherine Bradsher, and my youngest, Christine Bradsher.

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—oops, she is not here yet.

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 our three daughters, Charlotte, Catherine, and Christine, your love and unwavering support as we have served in Colorado, Korea, the Pentagon, and both of our deployments to Iraq mean everything to me. And to my uncle, 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 have served as VA's Chief of Staff for the past two-plus years but because I have lived it. I have seen what it looks like when one of my fellow soldiers transitions out of the military and gets the support they deserve from the VA, how they live happier, healthier, more fulfilled lives.

But I have also seen what it looks like when that does not happen—with my own dad, who did not 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 is VA's job to ensure that no veteran—no veteran—ever slips through the cracks. And I promise you that if I am 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 have 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 public service in Congress, the military, and the executive branch—under Republican and Democratic leadership—I have come to understand the critical nature of the partnership between the Hill and the VA. And from my deployment, I have even seen firsthand the importance of the PACT Act. I was exposed to burn pits within Iraq, and I am 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 have strived to lead with compassion and integrity, creating teams that perform well under pressure, and above all else, deliver. And that is 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 it is 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.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bradsher appears on page 25 of the Appendix.]

Chairman TESTER. Thank you for your statement. I will yield to the senior Senator of the Senate, Senator Murray.

SENATOR PATTY MURRAY

Senator MURRAY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and Ms. Bradsher, thank you for being here. Thank you for your service. Thank you for everything you have done for our country. Thank you to your family for allowing you to do this and for, I know, all

the sacrifices they have to make in order for you to do this, because it really is an important role. So thank you.

I want to start by talking about what I know will be a very large focus for you if you are confirmed to this role, and that is the electronic health record modernization. Now as you know, the staff in Spokane and Walla Walla, where the EHR has been deployed, has really worked hard and tirelessly to learn this new system, and as you know it has really put a strain on our providers and on our veterans. They are the current experts on this system. But I continue to hear from people on the ground, in my communities, that their feedback is not being taken into account or even heard.

So I wanted to ask you, in this role you will have the responsibility to oversee EHR implementation to make sure we get this right. How will you make sure that our veterans themselves and the providers are being heard and their feedback is actually taken into account during this modernization effort?

Ms. BRADSHER. Senator, thank you very much for that question. First and foremost, the Deputy Secretary is ultimately responsible for the electronic health care record, and if confirmed, that responsibility will fall fully on my shoulders.

First and foremost, we have to ensure that our veterans get the health care record they need. When I retired I hand-carried my medical records from the Pentagon to my VSO, and we simply have to have the electronic health care record that our veterans can rely on.

So first and foremost, going on, boots on the ground is how I have always led. Go to all five sites, listen to our veterans, do listening sessions, along with listening to our clinicians. I agree with you—our clinicians have not seen the results of their comments come back and executed within the electronic health care record. So we have the opportunity now, with the reset of the five sites, make sure that we are able to incorporate those recommendations enterprise-wide, because we cannot have five different records. We need to have enterprise-wide changes and ensure that we hold Cerner Oracle accountable so that those changes actually happen. And then be able to make those changes and also scale to a large, because right now we are at medium and small facilities. We need to be able to also scale it to a large facility.

Senator MURRAY. And as you mentioned, we are in a reset, and I just want to know how you are going to use your oversight role during this reset period to make sure we can deliver the care that we have promised.

Ms. BRADSHER. Thank you, Senator. First and foremost, what we have with the reset is being able to hold Oracle Cerner—we have 30 times stronger penalties. So for any challenges we have—

Senator MURRAY. In the new contract.

Ms. BRADSHER. In the new contract. I am sorry. On May 16th, we have a new contract. Also, we have five 1-year contracts. That allows us to hold them accountable each year and to make sure that we set those markers that we need for them and then go to the next contract. So those are the two great changes that we have with this new contract that will allow us to hold them accountable.

And also the changes that we will make do not just benefit VA. They will also benefit DoD, and being able to ensure, especially

with the outages—we have had definitely some issues with consistency and keeping the system up—we now have much tougher penalties for those outages.

Senator MURRAY. Okay. Well, as you know I will be in very close touch with you on this as we work through it. But I just want to make it very clear, staffing cuts are unacceptable, and I hope and expect for there to be a timely resolution to the concerns on the ground from the providers that we are hearing about that as well.

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator, if confirmed.

Senator MURRAY. And just real quickly, as you know women make up nearly 17 percent of active duty military forces and 19 percent of National Guard and Reserves. That number is rising. Talk to us about how you are going to use your role to make sure that VA is accessible and responsible to our women veterans.

Ms. BRADSHER. Thank you, Senator. Even this nomination hearing right now is historic, and if confirmed to serve as Deputy Secretary, I would take reaching out to all veterans, first and foremost, but especially for our women veterans. I have met so many women in the last couple of years who do not recognize their own service, who minimize their time, who tell me, “I only did 4 years. My husband did 20,” and they will fight for their husband’s benefits more than they fight for their own, or they will not even acknowledge their own service.

So one of the things is being creative, reaching out to platforms that VA has not touched into before, and I hope, if given the opportunity, that would be first and foremost, is doing that outreach.

Senator MURRAY. Thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

Ms. BRADSHER. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman TESTER. Senator Moran.

Senator MORAN. Chairman, thank you. Ms. Bradsher, tell me how your nomination came about. What happened at the Department of Veterans Affairs? What was the process by which you were chosen to be the nominee?

Ms. BRADSHER. Senator, Deputy Secretary Remy had let the Secretary know that he was looking to move on, and so the Secretary asked me if I would be interested in serving, and I told him yes, and then the White House worked it from there.

Senator MORAN. Pretty straightforward. Let me ask a couple of process questions. If you are confirmed, do you agree to testify before this Committee and our counterpart committee in the House whenever you are asked to testify?

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator.

Senator MORAN. If confirmed, do you agree to make certain that requests for information from Congress are fully responded to in a timely manner without regard to political party or committee status?

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator.

Senator MORAN. Thank you for that answer.

If confirmed—this is a substantive question—if confirmed, would you commit to preserving or expanding the access to care that veterans have currently, including the options given to them under the MISSION Act and the existing access standards, and to take no action that would restrict a veteran’s ability to choose the pro-

vider and care setting of their choice and make their own health care decisions?

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator. If confirmed, I will definitely look into being able to expand the care for our veterans as much as possible.

Senator MORAN. I am not trying to trick you into answering a question differently than you want to answer it, but I am trying to make certain that you have an appreciation for the value of the MISSION Act and its ability to serve veterans in rural and other circumstances, special need care. And so the crux of that question I will ask in this way. I want to make certain that you will work to preserving and expanding the access to that care under the MISSION Act.

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator, I will.

Senator MORAN. And is there anything that—and let me do one more. If you are confirmed—this is important. I bring a complaint or concern to the Department of Veterans Affairs, and I get an answer that is certainly pleasing to me, either a problem we solve, something that is being incorrectly handled at home or at someplace else across the country is occurring. Policy does not work well. The VA, the leadership offices here tell me that it has been corrected. I then discover that that communication apparently has not occurred back to the state of Kansas or to the local VA hospital.

So I would indicate that there is a significant opportunity for the VA to make certain that the decisions it makes here in Washington, DC, which I hope are informed by input from those at home, that once the decision is made, a correction has occurred, that the folks at the local community health clinic, the folks at the VA hospital, and the folks in the benefit world, that they then conduct themselves based upon the policies that I have been told are corrections that have been made.

So if confirmed, how would you help break down the silos between the VA central office in Washington, DC, and VA entities across the country, to make certain that the directives from program offices and leadership officials are responsive to the needs of, and faithfully executed by the field staff?

Ms. BRADSHER. Senator, thank you very much. If confirmed, one of the areas, obviously, and you see Secretary McDonough, who is on the road today, going out in the field, is the absolute best way to get that real-world information and making sure that the policies we are setting are actually being executed on the ground. Obviously, we cannot get to everything immediately, so one other way that I want to break down the silos is similar to what I have done as Chief of Staff, and that is I have taken all the chiefs across the administrations and the directorates and we meet weekly to have conversations, to make sure that implementation, best practices, any issues that we are able to handle at the lowest level possible, I want to replicate that same platform across the deputies and being able to ensure that we are getting that information down.

But having an open door for you, for our staff, and for our leadership to make sure that we say that communication piece. It is definitely a challenge with 427,000. But it has worked so far with the chiefs. I would like to try it also with the deputies.

Senator MORAN. The question I asked makes sense to you? I mean, the circumstances I described you would understand that they happen too frequently. That makes sense to you?

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes.

Senator MORAN. I would indicate that what I generally know about the concerns and needs of veterans is what I hear when I am walking down the street or the email that I get, the conversations I had on Memorial Day. And it is important, one, to make certain that when a correction, a solution is found that it is actually implemented, so it is not just conversation to me. We have taken care of the problem. And then secondly, usually those problems are something experienced by many other veterans. In many instances it is not an isolated instance, and we need to make certain that the rest of the VA, across the country, is complying with the fix. Again, that makes sense to you?

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator, it does.

Senator MORAN. Thank you, ma'am.

Ms. BRADSHER. Thank you.

Chairman TESTER. Thank you, Senator Moran.

We have now been joined by the honorable Senator from Illinois. Senator Duckworth, you have the floor for a post introduction.

INTRODUCTION BY THE HON. TAMMY DUCKWORTH

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I apologize for being a little bit late. It would have never happened in the Army. It happens all the time in the Senate, though, unfortunately.

Chairman Tester and Ranking Member Moran, thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs today. I am so deeply honored to introduce today's historic nominee, Ms. Tanya Bradsher, who is nominated to be Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

In a moment you are going to hear her explain why she answered the President's call to help lead the VA in fulfilling one of our Nation's most sacred obligations—caring for America's veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. But first I would like to address why Ms. Bradsher is the right choice to help lead the VA as we seek to modernize the Department to best serve multiple generations of veterans.

Like many military families, including mine, the history of military service in Ms. Bradsher's family runs back generations, both on her father's side, where she is a fourth-generation soldier, and on her mother's side, where her grandfather's service so inspired her mother that her mother was the driving force behind the nominee's military service. In fact, a mom encouraging her daughter to speak with recruiters and, in turn, Ms. Bradsher's mother supported her daughter's family when Ms. Bradsher deployed to Iraq.

Like her mom, Ms. Bradsher is also a military spouse, and she raised her children while on active duty as well. In fact, Ms. Bradsher was pregnant with her second of her three daughters and in the Pentagon on 9/11 itself.

Ms. Bradsher and her family have never shied away from serving our great Nation. In the course of her service she earned numerous awards, including the Legion of Merit and the Bronze Star, among other commendations. I mentioned these achievements and tributes

not just because they outline her unique experience, but because they demonstrate how her own service in uniform enables her to understand the challenges facing today's generations of post-9/11 veterans.

As veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars continue to grow older, the VA must proactively reach out to these veterans and bring them into the VA system. Though some veterans may minimize their service or shift focus to others they may see as more deserving, we need to make sure that the VA properly recognizes historically underserved veteran populations and draw them in.

Our VA must serve all who served. Tanya Bradsher is just the combat veteran to make that happen. Though it is not the reason for her nomination, if confirmed, Ms. Bradsher would be the highest-ranking woman veteran at the VA, ever. The first woman, the first woman veteran, the first woman combat veteran, the first woman of color to be Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Public servants like Ms. Bradsher do not take on these challenges. They do not answer this call because they want to be a first, or in Ms. Bradsher's case, many firsts. Though she may pave a path for those who come later, it is a selfless commitment to serving others that motivates people like Tanya Bradsher. For the past two years, she has served as the Department's Chief of Staff as the VA delivered an unprecedented level of benefits and health care services to our veterans and began to implement the historic PACT Act.

I am proud to introduce Ms. Bradsher today, and I am confident that she is ready to serve as Deputy Secretary. Thank you again for this opportunity, Mr. Chairman, and I strongly urge this Committee to support this impressive and patriotic nominee. Thank you.

Chairman TESTER. Thank you, Senator Duckworth, for those kind remarks about the nominee, and you are welcome to stay as long as you would like. We might even throw you in for a few questions if you really want.

Senator DUCKWORTH. I do not know. My adult supervision is right here, and they are probably going to pull me.

Chairman TESTER. I will now take the Chairman's privilege—sorry, Senator Hassan—to recognize Senator Brown.

SENATOR SHERROD BROWN

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Two American heroes sitting in front of us, so thank you both for serving in slightly different capacities but serving this country, so thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman mentioned the PACT Act, as did Senator Duckworth. When we talked earlier, Ms. Bradsher, on the phone, you told me about a conversation with a young veteran, a woman whom you met in a store, who told you that she, quote, "used to be a veteran." Talk to us, if you would, how we help ensure that veterans, particularly women veterans, understand the VA is there for them. I hear repeatedly from people from the roundtables I do on the PACT Act, that, "Well, somebody else deserves it more than I do. I do not really need these benefits." So talk about that.

Ms. BRADSHER. Thank you, Senator. There are so many veterans who, for many reasons, think that if they apply for their benefits then it is taking benefits from someone else, and the only way I have been successful in getting them to at least listen a little bit is for them to realize that it is also for their families.

Veterans definitely have a mission and purpose, and they have that from the military, and when they get out some of them really have these misperceptions on what the VA offers. And so working through that, the PACT Act has been helpful. We have been able to have unprecedented numbers. We are at a 30 percent increase for claims, and we are also seeing a great uptick for the toxic exposures. But we still have veterans who think that because they did not go to war, they do not qualify for VA. We have women veterans who think that because they only served one term that they do not qualify for the VA.

And I know you talked about the roundtables that you are doing, Senator, at home. I do the same thing. I go out and speak as much as possible, and I am always surprised at how many women just do not recognize the service that they have provided, and they minimize it. So it is definitely a challenge.

I did a roundtable at church, and I had a gentleman who had a Navy hat on, and I said, "Well, have you applied for PACT Act?" and he said, "No, no. I cannot apply for VA because I never went to war." And I said, "What do you mean? Of course, you did how many years?" and he said, "Seven years in the Navy." I said, "Well, seven years, you definitely qualify." But even—and I will not mention any of the members—even staff who have served here, who have deployed to Kuwait, did not realize that her time in Kuwait, even though she is a Guardsman, qualifies her for PACT Act.

It is a conversation, and working through and trying to figure out unique ways to communicate with our veterans, it cannot just be through just MSOs and VSOs. We are going to have to get creative, and we are going to have to reach the veterans where they are.

Senator BROWN. Thank you. Thank you for that answer, Ms. Bradsher.

You had talked about your own transition—I know Senator Murray asked about that too—from service to veteran status, if you will. I am particularly concerned about veterans' mental health during the transition process. We are working on legislation. I would just like a commitment from you if you would pledge to work with us on that bill.

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator. If confirmed, I would.

Senator BROWN. Thank you.

Last question. Senator Murray talked about the problems with the rollout. We know that the botched electronic record rollout has contributed to four veterans' deaths. I am glad the VA has taken the right steps to fix the system. We obviously must prevent these kinds of incidents. However, while VA works toward these changes there are five VAs still working on the current system. You, of course, know that. One of those is in Columbus. I have had extensive conversations with the Secretary of the VA about this.

Tell us, if you would, what steps you will take to protect veterans getting care from the VA that are currently using Oracle Cerner while working through the necessary fixes.

Ms. BRADSHER. Senator, first and foremost, making sure that our clinicians there know that we will support them and that also any of the changes that they are seeing, that we now, through Dr. Evans and through our leadership with the electronic health care record team, being able to address those issues so that we can quickly look at resolution, especially dealing with downtime. That seems to be a challenge that we are still working through.

So keeping those open lines of communication, making sure those five locations have the support that they need to be able to continue to execute to take care of our veterans, because that is the most important mission that we have.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Senator Hassan.

Chairman TESTER. Senator Tuberville.

SENATOR TOMMY TUBERVILLE

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Bradsher, thank you for being here today. I enjoyed our time visiting yesterday. That was very good. Thank you for your service and your husband's service, and your entire family's service. You have got a beautiful family.

Ms. BRADSHER. Thank you.

Senator TUBERVILLE. And I know you are proud of them. I know you are glad they are here supporting you today. That is important.

For this Committee to act as an effective oversight entity for taxpayers, the VA must act in an open and transparent manner. I have experienced, in the last few years, several instances—and we talked about this—of the VA not providing data and information I have requested in a timely manner, through questions for the record, formal letters, and other things.

As Deputy Secretary, do you commit to righting these errors and working with me and my staff providing information so we can work together?

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator, if confirmed.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you.

A majority of your career has involved strategic communications and outreach. As Assistant Secretary of Public Affairs at the Department of Homeland Security you oversaw public outreach for the entire department, and prior to that, when you worked at the White House, you served as Assistant Director of the Office of Public Engagement, where you led veteran, wounded warrior, and military family outreach initiatives.

Given your decades of experience in communication and engagement, how involved have you been in the VA strategy to educate and reach veterans on the PACT Act? You talked a little bit about that, but kind of explain it a little bit. How will you help with that?

Ms. BRADSHER. I do my best to stay out of Assistant Secretary Fulton's hair. It is really hard since I had that job over at DHS, Senator. But we have a strategic outreach, we have the Assistant Secretary of Public Affairs, but we have really looked at PACT Act as our main mission across the Department, and making sure, be-

cause of the deadline of August 9th, we want to make sure that all veterans know about the PACT Act. So between outreach with our veteran service organizations, all of our various platforms, and outreach, we have done something unprecedented for us. We have done over hundreds of events across the country in order to make sure that our veterans know about the PACT Act.

Senator TUBERVILLE. The PACT Act included a 1-year open enrollment period for the post-9/11 combat veterans.

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator. So they can backdate the claim to August 10, 2022.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. So 10 years past the separation from service of 9/11, that 1-year period will end on September 30th. I am concerned that the VA still does not have a mechanism to track the veterans who have enrolled under the authority thus far. You know, why, nine months after such significant legislation has passed, does the VA not have a better way to track these people?

Ms. BRADSHER. Senator, I think part of the challenge is we have some that file for PACT Act and they will also file for other claims that they had that may not be directly PACT Act-related. And then we have others who have seen the press from the PACT Act, who may not be impacted directly from the PACT Act but have decided to go ahead and apply. And so that is part of the challenge is pulling those together. But we do have some data in regard to how many PACT Act claims we have received so far.

Senator TUBERVILLE. How many veterans were eligible to enroll under the 1-year open enrollment period when the PACT Act was enacted? How many of them have enrolled at this point, do you think?

Ms. BRADSHER. We had 3 million we think are eligible. My understanding is we are about 800,000 have enrolled so far.

Senator TUBERVILLE. What steps is the VA taking to improve this tracking process, that you know of, of veterans that have not enrolled?

Ms. BRADSHER. Continued outreach, Senator. You know, trying to reach out to our untethered veterans, our Veteran Experience Office, trying to do as many events as possible, and looking for new ways to be able to reach our veterans.

Senator TUBERVILLE. You had an interesting story yesterday about your burn pit experience in Afghanistan. Correct?

Ms. BRADSHER. Iraq.

Senator TUBERVILLE. About jogging. And I would hope in the future, and I have talked to Secretary Austin about this, about burn pits being close to our camps and things like that. Could you tell your story there, about your jogging?

Ms. BRADSHER. Absolutely. I picked a horrible time to pick up running, and so I was at Diwaniya which is in Iraq, and the burn pit was located right in the center, so as you would run you would basically run around the burn pit. But it was not just that. It was also going to the TOC, going to get chow, any time you would always go by the burn pits. But runs were really tough because you were out there for the longest time, or at least I was, and so your eyes would water. And then after your shower you would spend the next five minutes coughing and getting the gunk out that you breathed in while you were running.

Senator TUBERVILLE. I can imagine how many veterans we have today that are having those problems.

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE. And hopefully we can help them with the PACT Act. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TESTER. Senator Hassan.

SENATOR MARGARET WOOD HASSAN

Senator HASSAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our nominee. Ms. Bradsher, I really appreciate your service. I appreciate your family and their support of your service as well.

And before I turn to my questions I just want to let you know I really enjoyed our visit in my office a couple of weeks ago, I think it was, and our discussion about the difficulties that New Hampshire is having with its aging VA infrastructure. And I just will continue to follow up with you and Secretary McDonough to ensure that those critical updates to the Manchester VA Medical Center are completed as quickly as possible. It is on the minds of all of the veterans in New Hampshire.

I also wanted to just start my questions by thanking you for all of your discussion of and talking about the PACT Act. I am glad we were able to pass it last summer. As you know, and have talked about, it allows more veterans accessing more benefits that they have earned and deserved.

In New Hampshire alone, since the passage of the PACT Act, veterans have already filed more than 2,000 PACT Act-related claims, and more than 1,200 veterans have enrolled in VA health care.

In your testimony, you highlighted the importance of the new benefits provided under the PACT Act as well as the need to reach out to veterans who have never come to the VA before. So you have talked a little bit with Senator Tuberville and others about this, but how will you ensure, if you are confirmed, that all veterans are able to access their health care and benefits under the PACT Act?

Ms. BRADSHER. Senator, thank you so much, and I enjoyed our conversation as well.

First and foremost, we have been able, but we still have to do more, working through our Public Affairs Office, our outreach offices, and also just continuing to do the events. But we also need to hit the major platforms. We need to get creative. We need to talk to Peloton, and we need to be able to get to the women's magazines for our ladies, and we need to talk about cars, and be able to get VA in those different niches where we are going to find veterans who may or may not get their American Legion magazine. I get my American Legion magazine—I should say that up front. But we just need to go beyond just our VSOs and getting super creative.

Senator HASSAN. Well, please also feel free to reach out to us so we can be part of that creative work with you, because we just know how important it is to our veterans.

Your nomination is a truly historic opportunity, as Senator Duckworth has noted, to bring the perspective of a woman veteran to top leadership within the VA. So I want to bring to your attention the example of the importance of that perspective.

Some women veterans who served on cultural support teams in Afghanistan have faced challenges in getting their combat engagements documented in their service records and getting their injuries recognized by the VA. These women served an important role in ensuring that our special forces were able to communicate with local Afghan women. We needed our women in the field there, in combat situations, to make that communication happen. Yet upon returning home they received little recognition for their role in combat. Many struggle still to get support for the injuries that they sustained during their service.

How will you ensure that the VA learns from the perspective of veterans like these women and addresses the obstacles that they face in accessing health care and benefits?

Ms. BRADSHER. Senator, if confirmed, and quite frankly, even in my current role, I would love to meet with them to look for what the challenges they are having and what they are finding that PACT Act does not cover because that is the piece. You know, we have 27 presumptives that really have 276 conditions. And so if there are areas that we are not able to cover them—

Senator HASSAN. So forgive me for interrupting. The issue here is that their work as cultural support teams is not being documented in their record as combat service.

Ms. BRADSHER. Gotcha.

Senator HASSAN. And I think it would be great to facilitate this conversation in this meeting. But this is where I think having women in leadership is so critically important for the mission of the VA.

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator.

Senator HASSAN. And lastly, as we discussed when we met, we both understand the importance of the successful transition process for service members separating from military service. Last year, my bipartisan Solid Start Act was passed into law, which makes sure that the VA's Solid Start Program will continue to be a resource for service members when they are leaving active duty. I continue to believe that the VA can do more to connect veterans to their VA benefits and their local community support networks during this critical period of such enormous change, and you have talked about it a little bit.

But if confirmed, how will you work to support veterans during this transition?

Ms. BRADSHER. For transition we have to reach our veterans much sooner, Senator. They should understand what they are entitled to for the VA. And it is also a little confusing when you have Department of Labor for one piece, VA for another, and DoD for transition. So if confirmed, I would love to work with all three, with the DoD and Department of Labor, to ensure that we get one-stop shopping for our veterans, because it can be really confusing when you are not sure exactly what you are looking for, and we need all those resources in one location.

Senator HASSAN. Okay. Thank you very much, and thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman TESTER. Thank you, Senator Hassan, and thank you for your flexibility.

Look, many of the questions that I am going to bring up you have already touched already, but I am going to start at the beginning. You have an admirable background in both military and civilian service. You are currently Chief of Staff of the VA, which is not exactly a job of chopped liver. It is pretty damn important. Why do you want this job?

Ms. BRADSHER. Senator, being in a Senate-confirmed position, I can help more veterans. And I have thoroughly enjoyed being Chief of Staff, but being able to implement in ways that, as Chief of Staff, I influence, I think would be a wonderful opportunity. And at the end of the day, I just want to take care of veterans, and I can take care of more veterans as Deputy than I can as Chief.

Chairman TESTER. Okay. This Committee, on a bipartisan basis, has pushed the Department to hold Oracle Cerner more accountable, and secured an EHR contract that not only works for our veterans but also works for VA medical personnel and the American taxpayer.

It has already been pointed out the new contract, I believe, in the middle of May, May 16th, was signed. Can you tell us about this new contract? Are you familiar with it?

Ms. BRADSHER. Senator, I am familiar with it, but I was not part of the negotiations.

Chairman TESTER. That is fine. Can you tell me how this contract puts VA in a better position, from an accountability standpoint?

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator, absolutely. The original contract was a 5-year contract, so we did not have the ability to bring Cerner, now Oracle Cerner, back to the drawing board until every five years. The changes that they made under Acting Deputy Secretary Guy Kiyokawa and the leadership team with Dr. Evans is to be able to have five 1-year contracts, so every year we can hold Oracle Cerner accountable.

Second, the penalties are now 30 times greater for outages, and they are now incremental versus just a day. So we have the ability to hold Oracle Cerner accountable in ways that the previous contract did not.

Chairman TESTER. You came out of the military. Your husband did too. You guys understand how this outfit works. When it comes to electronic health records or the PACT Act implementation, you are very much dependent on the DoD to do good work, for you to do good work. And I will say this. You did not say this. Sometimes the DoD kind of big-foots you guys out of the road.

You, as Deputy Secretary, would serve as co-chair of the VA/DoD Joint Executive Committee. That committee, Joint Committee, recently made the development and implementation of the Individual Longitudinal Exposure Record as number one priority, and thank God, because it is critically important if we are going to get these in PACT Act implementation.

Thinking back to your previous times, thinking to this position, how could DoD be more engaged in this interagency process as it pertains to PACT Act implementation, and how you, as Deputy Secretary, could force them to be more accountable to the veteran?

Ms. BRADSHER. Thank you very much for the question, Chairman. If confirmed to serve as Deputy Secretary, I would hope to

work with the JEC to be able to interact with all service members who have deployed so that they have PACT Act information before they ever get out of the military. They do not. We really need to have them identified so that they are able to understand what PACT Act is, what those presumptives are, and how VA can assist them so that when it is time for them to go, when it is time for them to transition, be it they retire or they get out, they know the next step is us, and that we are going to not only be able to take care of them but take the research that we are able to get from ILER and also make sure that we can take care of these veterans, not just right when they get out but throughout their lives.

The other piece is to focus on how we can work with the electronic health care record, making sure that the interoperability, that we are able to work through that so the smooth transition, as much as possible, when we are able to expand Oracle Cerner beyond just the first five sites.

The other piece is facilities. How do we look at facilities to get VA access to some of the military facilities so that we are able to have our physicians there, share space, be able to take care? Maybe we partner in ways where we can also take care of active duty while taking care of retirees simultaneously. We have some very unique opportunities.

Chairman TESTER. So on this Joint Executive Committee you are going to be dealing probably with people that have a few stars on their shoulder, and maybe many stars on their shoulder. Does that intimidate you?

Ms. BRADSHER. No, Senator.

Chairman TESTER. Good.

Senator Hassan talked about this. Senator King is also very passionate about it, the transition. We have had a bunch of hearings on transition. You have probably watched most of them on TV. But one thing that is absolutely obvious to me is that if we do not do a better job of transitioning we are never going to get our arms around the veteran suicide issue.

Ms. BRADSHER. I agree.

Chairman TESTER. The transition starts long before they get out of the military. Once again, getting back to the Joint Executive Committee, how do you intend to use that position to influence some military who, by the way, its main job is to go out and fight and win, to influence to put attention to transition? And as I believe you have already pointed out, early transition is key. Talk to me about how you are going to get this done.

Ms. BRADSHER. Senator—

Chairman TESTER. Because we talked about suicide almost every meeting, in some form or another. It is a huge issue. Losing one soldier to suicide is too many, and we are losing a hell of a lot more than one. And so how do you deal with this issue, from your position, assuming you are confirmed?

Ms. BRADSHER. Senator, you are absolutely right. Death by suicide is a huge concern with veterans, and the biggest challenge I have seen is when veterans transition it is that sense of purpose. It is being able to find their niche when the military is gone and they are out. And it is just so incredibly vital.

Partnership with the Department of Defense is key because, as you can see, veteran families, we usually raise more veterans, or more military, and so being able to work with the Department of Defense, being able to identify any service members who have struggles so that when they transition we are able to work with them and know, being able to ensure that they know that the VA is there for them is so vital, and that they are not by themselves. We have to break through a little to get to the active duty service members and the Guard and Reserve so that they know that VA is a welcoming home for them. But we also have to make sure that we are that welcoming home.

Chairman TESTER. I think one of the things, and I believe you brought it up too, was the one-stop shop experience. I think that can make a big difference in simplifying their lives and knowing that we have their back—

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator.

Chairman TESTER.—Once they get out of the military.

Last question before I get to Senator Blumenthal. The VA has reached a number of long-awaited agreements with its labor partners. Tell me how these agreements are going to help support the VA of improving recruitment and retention across the enterprise.

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator. Exactly. We are super fortunate. Senator McDonough went down to Durham to sign that for our nurses, and our nurses are our backbone for our health care system. So they will be able to help us with recruiting, help us with retention, and also raise any issues so that we are able to address them before we have a nurse walk out the door. That is why the unions are so vital and important for us to have that communication.

Chairman TESTER. Very good. Senator Blumenthal.

SENATOR RICHARD BLUMENTHAL

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for having this hearing, and sorry to be late getting here. But I appreciated our conversation yesterday and enjoyed it. And as I indicated then I am really delighted that you are going to be assuming this position. I think we need this kind of leadership, especially from someone who has your experience, 20 years in the Army, and who knows what it is like to be a female veteran. I know that Senator Murray asked you about plans to improve access to care for our female veterans. Connecticut, for example, has a new facility for them. But how would you assess the current state of care for female veterans around the country?

Ms. BRADSHER. We have some locations, Senators, who are doing an amazing job taking care of our women veterans. I do think that we need to ensure that that incredible care is across the board. The VA that I entered 10 years ago, which is down the road, out-processed at the VA medical center, is totally different than the organization in 2013, than when I went to visit last year and this year.

So I do think culturally competent care across the board. Every facility has a specialist there, but making sure that it is uniform and that our veterans, our women veterans in particular, feel welcomed in each facility that they enter.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. We spoke yesterday about the K2 veterans and about the need to expand care for our K2 veterans who worked, as you know, in Uzbekistan, in a former Soviet air base, have been exposed to toxic chemicals and potential radiation. Will you commit to working with me to expand care to those veterans and also to secure, from the Department of Defense, the records that are needed to assess the potential exposure that they have?

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator, if confirmed.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Let me ask you about the VA facility in Connecticut. As we discussed yesterday, Secretary McDonough has visited that facility. I hope you will as well. I am inviting you to come and see it and actually see for yourself the need to rebuild it. It is a 1950s structure. Like many across the country, many VA facilities, it has some of the best docs, nurses, staff in the world. They are working with facilities that are out-of-date, and they are extraordinarily dedicated and expert professionals. But we need the new rebuilding, which is ongoing—new parking garage, new surgery clinic—but the entire facility. So I would suggest that you come see it for yourself.

Let me ask you about electronic health record modernization, another topic we discussed. What can be done to make sure that these systems are completed to be interoperable?

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator. First and foremost, during the reset we are going to have to focus on those first five sites and make sure that we have listened to our veterans, that we have listened to our clinicians, and that we are able to take those best practices and those concerns and work with Oracle Cerner to make the changes that we need in order to be able to fix the record at those five sites.

We also need to ensure that the record is scalable so that we can get it deployed to larger sites, including Level 1 sites.

But we are not going to do anything until it is fully ready to go. We will work with the firm. I will work with, if confirmed, also our EHR team and Department of Defense, the JEC, to ensure that we have those changes and that we have the health care record our veterans deserve.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. I want to again thank you for your service and thank your family for their support, and their service, and look forward to working with you. Thank you for taking this very, very important position. I look forward to working with you. Thank you.

Ms. BRADSHER. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman TESTER. Senator King.

SENATOR ANGUS S. KING, JR.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to the Committee. Nice to see you this afternoon.

As you know, an issue I have been involved with is domiciliary care in veteran homes generally. We passed a statute on this. It has now been 28 months. We still do not have a rule. And I would appreciate a timeline to get that done. Twenty-eight months is too long for a rule. And by the way, that rule should be retroactive, given the time that has elapsed. This is a real hardship to our veteran homes. Something like \$3 million a year being lost because

they are doing the right thing by taking care of veterans with dementia. So I hope you will attend to that issue.

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator, if confirmed, I will definitely do that.

Senator KING. Thank you. Number two, I know various people have talked about the electronic medical records. I want you to be really obnoxious on this contract. I do not know if you have it in you, but try, because so far we have not held the contractor to their obligations. I know it has been changed to a year-to-year. That gives us substantial leverage. I hope you will use it, because if we have specific goals in terms of metrics, approval rating by the users, all of those kinds of things, timeliness, lack of crashes, and if they are not meeting them there should be penalties, and that should be part of the contract. They should have costs if they do not meet those metrics.

I am concerned that we are sort of drifting through this process and not holding the contractors accountable. There are billions of dollars at stake here, taxpayer money. This has been a drama that we really ought to be bringing to a close. So I want you to call on your inner bear to go after this issue.

Ms. BRADSHER. Senator, I am a mother of three from ages 23 to 17. I have bear in me, and I am happy—

Senator KING. You know what I am talking about.

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator.

Senator KING. I am serious, though.

Ms. BRADSHER. No, and I agree. I do not mean to make light, but absolutely, it is vital for our veterans.

Senator KING. Thank you.

Chairman TESTER. Senator King, I might add that she just told me earlier that she is not afraid of people with stars on their shoulders either.

Senator KING. Thank you, sir.

Transition. I am going to be submitting several amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act on the Armed Services Committee. One would be to change the opt-in to an opt-out on notifying the state veterans service officer on the DD 2648. That is number one, because now only 15 percent of transitioning veterans opt in, and the whole idea of transition is to have somebody there to welcome them. But we cannot do that if we do not know who they are and that they are coming. That is number one.

Number two, we would allow transitioning veterans to enroll in the VA before they actually leave, so that there is an enrollment that takes place before they leave service. They can maybe even set up appointments.

And the third amendment is to make the Department of Labor a full member of the Joint Executive Committee. Now they are kind of an advisory. I think they ought to be involved.

Can you support those three amendments?

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator.

Senator KING. Thank you. I will relay that to the Armed Services Committee.

And finally, and I think this question may have come up, women veterans are still reporting to me that they do not feel fully empowered in the VA system. They are 11 percent. Now they will be 20

percent in a few years. Can we somehow deal with that issue to be sure that our VA system adequately represents the interests of female veterans?

Ms. BRADSHER. Yes, Senator. That would be one of my key goals, if confirmed.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will yield back.

Chairman TESTER. Well, I want to thank the Committee members for being here. I want to thank the nominee for being here, and I appreciate your very direct answers to the questions and not filibustering. And I mean that. Thank you. I think it speaks to you as a person.

I would ask that any of the questions that are put forth to the Committee be at the Clerk no later than 5 p.m. on Friday. And with that—

Ms. BRADSHER. Senator, can I correct the record? I apologize. I did make an error when I was talking to Senator Tuberville. The new enrollees for PACT Act, the population is 84,000. I apologize. I said 800,000, so it was my error. I apologize.

Chairman TESTER. Let the record reflect that correction. All right?

Thank you for being here. I thank your family for being here. And I would love to give you a timeline on when we hope to kick you out of Committee, but let us just put it this way—we will do it as quickly as we possibly can.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:59 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

**Nomination Material for
TANYA J. BRADSHER**

**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.

**Pre-Hearing Questions for the Record
Nomination Hearing of Tanya Bradsher to be
Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs
From Ranking Member Jerry Moran**

- 1. Why does President Biden want you to be Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs? Are there any specific issues or areas that you have discussed with the President and/or members of his staff as particular priorities in this role? If so, please describe them.**

I have not spoken to the president, but I am honored to have been nominated by President Biden to serve as Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs. As VA's current Chief of Staff, a 4th generation Army Soldier, a female combat Veteran, and a military spouse, I believe I can bring a unique perspective to this important role. I am committed to serving our nation's Veterans and ensuring they receive the care and support they deserve. It is my privilege to have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those who have served our country.

- 2. Have you discussed your nomination with Secretary McDonough, and do you know what his expectations for you would be if you are confirmed? If so, please describe them.**

If I am confirmed to be the Deputy Secretary, my mission will be to serve as the Chief Operating Officer for the VA, overseeing the day-to-day operations. Secretary McDonough has expressed his commitment to providing me with all the necessary tools to be successful in this role. He has also emphasized the critical importance of continuing to foster the positive culture that we have worked hard to create. With his support and guidance, I am confident that I will be able to make a meaningful contribution to the VA's mission of serving our Nation's Veterans.

- 3. If confirmed, what will your top priorities be and what outcome measures will you use to assess your performance with respect to those priorities?**

First, I will focus on transition and ensure that our military service members have access to all the tools they need before they depart the service. My success on this priority would be measured by whether more transitioning service members have access to more of VA tools before departing the military.

Second, I will lead the deployment of the electronic health record system focusing first on the original five sites and only deploying to additional sites when it is fully ready. My success on this priority would be measured by completion of the improvements needed at the five sites and the electronic health record is successfully deployed.

And third, I will continue to build trust with Veterans. I want to ensure that VA is reaching untethered Veterans and getting them care and benefits they deserve. My success on this priority would be measured by whether more Veterans are getting more timely care and benefits than ever before.

4. Please describe your top accomplishments as Chief of Staff of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and, using specific examples, discuss how you have demonstrated success in that role.

- Last year, I had the opportunity to lead the VA team in charge of transitioning the Veteran Small Business Certification Program to the Small Business Administration. This was a necessary step as mandated by the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2021. Throughout the transition process, we had to attend several interagency meetings and meet various milestones. I'm proud to say that we exceeded our requirements and successfully completed the transition.
- I am the Secretary's representative for VA's Homeless Veteran Program., I held a summit here in DC and have made multiple trips across the country to meet with our Homeless Program staff members to understand the challenges that they face. In the past two years, we have opened three buildings to permanently house more than 200 homeless Veterans at the Greater Los Angeles VA campus, exceeded the Secretary's goal of permanently housing 38,000 homeless Veterans for 2022 and are on track to meet the 2023 homeless goals.
- I pulled together VA's human resource experts across the department to determine which hiring authorities we needed to implement the PACT Act. Thanks to the Senate Veterans Affairs committee, we were able to have those authorities in Title IX of the PACT Act. We're still meeting regularly to continue implementing those authorities and to streamline the onboarding process across the VA.
- Upon my arrival, I noticed that VA's public-private partnerships with non-governmental organizations were not being centrally managed with department wide oversight. After numerous consultations, I directed senior staff to redesignate the Secretary's Center for Strategic Partnerships to the Veterans Affairs Office of Partnerships to provide an enterprise-wide resource for private sector collaborations while actively managing risks by ensuring transparency and compliance with relevant authorities, policies, and directives.

5. What experience do you have that qualifies you to be responsible for, among other things, overseeing acquisitions and the Electronic Health Record Modernization program? What specific challenges do you see at VA to which you would apply that experience?

As someone who has served in the military, I understand the frustration and hassle of having to personally transport medical records to a Veteran service officer for VA claims processing. It's crucial that we provide our Veterans with the most seamless transition possible from military to civilian life while also ensuring that they have access to their complete medical history. I served at the Defense Health Agency as traveled to the Pacific Northwest when MHS GENESIS was initially deployed. I saw firsthand the importance of change management. If confirmed to serve as Deputy Secretary, I will take charge of deploying the Oracle Cerner EHR and ensuring that it's optimized for use at the five current sites. I have numerous years of working within the interagency and with the Department of Defense, as Chief of Staff I will be able to hit the ground running. My top

priority will be to travel to the five sites and listen to feedback from Veterans and clinicians to ensure that the EHR is working as efficiently as possible before deploying it to future sites.

- 6. Please describe why it is important that Congress provides adequate oversight of federal agencies, including VA. If confirmed, will you commit to providing timely, thorough, and substantive responses to members of Congress – regardless of political party and Committee status - who submit requests for information, questions for the record (QFRs), letters, or otherwise contact the Department?**

As a former Chief of Staff for a Member of Congress, I have a unique perspective in understanding the importance of Congressional oversight and how vital providing timely and substantial responses to Congressional inquiry is for the VA's success. Secretary McDonough has stressed the importance of an open and transparent relationship between VA and Members of this Committee and if confirmed, I would continue that. I believe that Veterans deserve nothing less from us as leaders. Additionally, I have lived a life of service to our nation and have always approached my work with a focus on the mission, regardless of political party or Committee status. If confirmed as Deputy Secretary, I would continue to do the same.

- 7. Please describe your assessment of VA's organizational culture and any relevant experience you have had effectively changing cultural norms to improve performance.**

As someone who has served as Chief of Staff for the VA over the past two years, I can confidently say that the department is deeply committed to its mission of caring for those who have served our country, as well as their families, caregivers, and survivors. However, like any large organization, the VA faces its fair share of challenges, particularly when it comes to navigating bureaucracy and silos. With my 27 years of experience as a leader in the military, executive branch, and Congress, I have always taken a results-oriented approach to breaking down barriers and driving positive change. Under the direction of Secretary McDonough, I am proud to say that we have created a work environment that truly allows our VA employees to bring their whole selves to work. I have empowered our Chief of Staffs by establishing a Chief of Staff Council that meets weekly to share best practices and identify and resolve VA-wide issues. I re-established and oversaw all our major special events post-Covid and meet with our senior leaders who have worked tirelessly to ensure that everyone feels valued and supported. Thanks to our collective efforts, we were recently awarded the Top 5 best places to work for both 2021 and 2022.

- 8. Please describe what you think an accountable and just culture would look like for VA and how, if confirmed, you would work to achieve that culture across the Department.**

As Secretary McDonough has emphasized, accountability is vital to the success of any organization, including the VA. I couldn't agree more. To foster a culture of accountability, leaders must be transparent and open, prioritize results, and ensure that the right people are in place to achieve the organization's mission. If I am confirmed, I will continue to lead with these principles in mind. Additionally, I believe that the VA

must use the tools provided by Congress to hold employees accountable in a fair, equitable, and just manner. If I am confirmed, I am committed to working with the Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection to support their work in conducting independent investigations and protecting employees who report issues from retaliation.

- 9. Please describe why you think the Federal government should, or should not, provide medical care and financial, education, employment, and burial benefits to certain Veterans, caregivers, survivors, and dependents. What outcomes do you believe these benefits and services are attempting to effect and do you believe those are the right outcomes to pursue? Why or why not?**

I've had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the positive impact that the Federal Government's support can have on a transitioning Soldier's life. It's truly remarkable to see how they become happier, healthier, and more fulfilled. However, I've also seen the unfortunate reality when that support is lacking. If I am confirmed, I will make it my top priority to ensure that every Veteran receives the world-class care, benefits, and support they deserve. It's critical that these services are delivered efficiently and effectively, and that we fulfill our sacred obligation to those who have bravely served our Nation.

- 10. If confirmed, you will serve as co-chair of the Joint Executive Council with the Department of Defense (DOD). What issues would you prioritize working on in that role to better support Veterans, particularly those transitioning out of the military?**

The Joint Executive Council's (JEC) purpose is to promote beneficial coordination between VA and DOD to improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the delivery of benefits and services to Veterans, service members, military retirees, and their families. With that in mind, if confirmed, I would serve as the Co-chair of the JEC and prioritize the following issues:

1. Electronic Health Record (EHR) Interoperability
2. Pre-Separation Access to VA Benefits
3. Joint Sharing of Facilities and Services

- 11. If confirmed, what is your plan for effectively overseeing the operations of a bureaucracy and a workforce as large and complex as VA's?**

In my current role, I was able to empower VA's Chief of Staff's by implementing a weekly Chief of Staff Council. I truly believe that this structure was beneficial in identifying any issues, sharing best practices, and resolving as many issues as possible before the primary leaders had to get involved. With that said, I would create a similar structure for the VA's Deputies. By doing so, we can further streamline our processes and make sure that decision makers are fully participating. Additionally, I believe that we could retool some of our current meetings to maximize their effectiveness.

- 12. If confirmed, how will you ensure open communication with Congress, Veterans, caregivers, survivors, Veteran and military service organizations, VA staff, and other stakeholders and advocates?**

As someone who has worked in the Congress before, I fully understand the crucial role that Congress and this committee play in overseeing the VA and communicating with Veterans. It's absolutely essential that the VA stays in constant communication with Veterans, caregivers, survivors, and other key stakeholders, and that we remain open and transparent about our operations. If I'm confirmed, I commit to maintain the same level of communication and transparency that we've seen under Secretary McDonough's leadership.

13. If confirmed, how will you make certain that the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) provides timely and high-quality health care to Veteran patients, particularly those who are at high-risk for suicide, homelessness, or adverse health outcomes or who have unique barriers to care?

Veterans who risked their lives to serve us deserve access to the highest quality, timely care that our country can offer. I understand some of the grave challenges our most vulnerable Veterans face in accessing care and I'm committed to finding solutions to strengthen our network and coordination with community providers, promoting a whole health approach to ensure vulnerable Veterans receive integrated care across the spectrum of VA benefits and services, and adapting services to meet the needs of our vulnerable Veterans. If confirmed, I would work in collaboration with Secretary McDonough and Under Secretary Elnahal to make sure no Veteran is left behind.

14. What role do you think non-VA providers should play with respect to delivering timely and high-quality health care to Veteran patients?

Providing Veterans with timely access to high quality health care is absolutely essential and our non-VA providers play a crucial role in delivering care to Veterans. Non-VA providers bring expertise and resources that support the services and health care VA provides to make health care services available to Veterans. If confirmed, I would work with great focus to ensure effective coordination and collaboration with non-VA providers to ensure our combined effort produces the best possible outcomes for Veterans.

15. If confirmed, how will you make certain that VA follows both the letter and intent of the laws enacted by Congress, including but not limited to the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act (P.L. 115-41), the MISSION Act (P.L. 115-182), the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act (P.L. 116-171), and the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our PACT Act (P.L. 117-168)?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the VA carries out its statutory and constitutional obligations. Additionally, I will keep in close consultation with you, this Committee, and your staff to ensure VA is following Congressional intent.

16. If confirmed, how would you balance the multiple competing priorities that would demand your attention alongside execution of critical pieces of legislation like those mentioned above?

We must be able to balance competing priorities at VA, because that is what Veterans deserve and expect of us. If confirmed, I would ensure that employees across VA have the resources and tools needed to accomplish our mission while focusing on building and retaining our quality workforce. My time as the Chief of Staff of VA has also given me insight into where and how to focus my efforts as a leader to break down silos and increase collaboration.

17. If confirmed, how will you make certain that the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) processes Veterans' claims with the accuracy and alacrity needed to provide timely, accurate, and thorough decisions?

If confirmed, I would fight like hell to deliver more benefits to more Veterans than ever before. I will work with Under Secretary for Benefits (USB), Joshua Jacobs, to help ensure that VBA has the workforce, tools, and support they need to deliver on both PACT Act and Non-PACT Act benefits. I will also work closely with the USB and Veterans Experience Office on ways to improve the overall Veteran experience and communication from VA on claims.

18. If confirmed, how will you make certain that VBA receives the resources required to reduce the claims and exams backlog as well as prioritize economic empowerment programs like the GI Bill, the vocational readiness and employment program, the home loan program, the Solid Start program, and others?

I confirmed, I would work closely with Under Secretary Joshua Jacobs and make sure we are meeting our goals across VBA. Since I have been Chief of Staff, VBA has been actively hiring and training more employees, implementing policy and process changes to increase efficiencies. They are also in the early stages of leveraging automated decision support tools to help our expanded workforce handle a large influx of claims with speed and alacrity. Additionally, VA is focusing on providing VBA's talented workforce with the resources and support necessary to continue making timely and accurate decisions on claims, and all of the other critical VBA programs Veterans rely on such as Home Loan Guaranty, Education, Life Insurance, Veteran Readiness and Employment, Pension and Fiduciary.

19. If confirmed, how will you prioritize working with the Secretary, the Office of General Counsel, the Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, and others to make certain that poor performing employees are held accountable in an appropriate and timely manner?

I believe that accountability starts at the top, and if confirmed I will hold myself and senior leadership at VA accountable for their performance. VA can only be as strong as its leaders. I commit to use all available resources to continue to cultivate VA in creating a workforce of high reliability employees, assist those who need help in becoming high reliability employee, and closely evaluate all employee fairly including the poor performers doing everything I can for the success of VA employees. I will work closely with the Assistant Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower protection and the Office of General Counsel to ensure that investigations lead to root cause analysis and

corrective action that is long lasting and serves the best interest of Veterans. Additionally, I believe that VA must use the tools that Congress created to hold employees accountable in a fair, equitable, and just manner.

20. **Since 2015, the Government Accountability Office has designated VA as a high-risk government program, finding “ambiguous VA policies lead to inconsistency in the way its facilities carry out processes at the local level, which may pose risks for Veterans’ access to VA health care, or for the quality and safety of VA health care.” What have you done to address this as Chief of Staff and, if confirmed, what will you do to ensure that critical policy guidance is up to date and implemented consistently across the Department? What outdated written policy guidance would you make sure VA prioritizes for an update?**

As Chief of Staff, I sat on the major governance bodies stood up by Secretary McDonough— the VA Operations Board (VAOB) and VA Executive Board (VAEB). These bodies are composed of VA senior leaders, subject matter experts and field leaders charged with enterprise-wide visibility on major decisions and initiatives, including proposed policy changes, as well as informational briefings on strategic priorities and timely matters. Those long-standing challenges identified by GAO — efficiency, consistent policy, and overall processes— are at the very heart of VAOB and VAEB. If confirmed as Deputy Secretary, I would chair the VAOB and commit to bringing together local representation on these entities to close any deltas between the field and headquarters, exercise jointness and execute clear policy guidance.

If confirmed, I will also prioritize my current efforts with regularly convening VA’s chief human capital officers across the enterprise to focus on implementing PACT Act workforce authorities under Title IX— bringing local and regional feedback to the table— and continue to prioritize improving hiring and onboarding processes and experiences for new employees.

Lastly, I commit to ensuring the continued drumbeat under this Secretary in addressing challenges and recommendations identified by GAO are a priority of mine, including the areas on the high-risk list. Both GAO and Congressional oversight on these matters help VA better serve Veterans.

**Pre-Hearing Questions for the Record
Nomination Hearing of Tanya Bradsher to be
Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs
From Chairman Jon Tester**

1. Have you discussed with Secretary McDonough the duties he would like you to perform, or the role he would like you to assume, as Deputy Secretary?

If I am confirmed to be the Deputy Secretary, my mission will be to serve as the Chief Operating Officer for the VA, overseeing the day-to-day operations. Secretary McDonough has expressed his commitment to providing me with all the necessary tools to be successful in this role. He has also emphasized the critical importance of continuing to foster the positive culture that we have worked hard to create. With his support and guidance, I am confident that I will be able to make a meaningful contribution to the VA's mission of serving our Nation's Veterans.

2. What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the Department of Veterans Affairs at this time — externally, in VA as a whole, and specifically in the Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Health Administration, and National Cemetery Administration?

I believe that one of the biggest challenges facing the department is the time it takes to onboard personnel. It's disheartening to hear about great candidates who end up taking other jobs because we were too slow to hire them after selection. We need to reduce the time to hire from months to weeks if we want to remain competitive, especially when it comes to hiring clinical staff. If confirmed to serve as Deputy Secretary, I would work with our VA leadership, this committee and the interagency to update old policies, streamline hiring and bolster recruiting.

For Veterans Benefits Administration, we must stay vigilant on managing the backlog, diminish delays and encourage Veterans, caregivers and survivors to apply for their benefits. If confirmed, I would work closely with Under Secretary Joshua Jacobs and make sure we are meeting our goals across VBA. Since I have been Chief of Staff, VBA has been actively hiring and training more employees, implementing policy and process changes to increase efficiencies. They are also in the early stages of leveraging automated decision support tools to help our expanded workforce handle a large influx of claims with speed and alacrity.

I agree with Secretary McDonough that infrastructure and hiring as one of Veterans Health Administration's major challenges. We must replace our aging hospitals faster or find alternative leasing options that allow our clinicians to provide the star. The average age of VA medical facilities is 60 years old, and 69% of VA's main hospitals are at least 50 years old. If confirmed, I would work with VA's Office of Asset Enterprise Management and this committee to identify and implement effective measures that would ensure that our veterans receive the quality healthcare they deserve in modern and well-equipped facilities. Further, I would work closely with Under Secretary of Health, Dr. Elnahal, on the road ahead under the contract for the Electronic Health Record Management program to ensure VHA and our clinicians remain a steadfast and vigilant partner and voice on the execution of this important and transformative program for Veterans.

I believe that the National Cemetery Administration can do more to educate Veterans about their burial benefits. It's concerning that many Veterans may not be aware of the full extent of the benefits available to them. It's important that we honor our Veterans and their service by ensuring they have access to the resources and support they need in their final resting place. If confirmed, I would work with Under

Secretary Quinn, Veteran Experience Office, VA's public affairs team and lift our partnership with DoD to create a robust outreach program.

3. What would be your top three priorities after assuming the role of Deputy Secretary?

If confirmed, my first priority will be to focus on transition and ensure that our military service members have access to all the tools they need before they depart the service. My success on this priority would be measured by whether more transitioning service members have access to more of VA tools before departing the military.

Second, I will lead the deployment of the electronic health record system focusing first on the original five sites and only deploying to additional sites when it is fully ready. My success on this priority would be measured by completion of the improvements needed at the five sites and the electronic health record is successfully deployed.

And third, I will continue to build trust with Veterans. I want to ensure that VA is reaching untethered Veterans and getting them care and benefits they deserve. My success on this priority would be measured by whether more Veterans are getting more timely care and benefits than ever before.

4. If confirmed, what efforts would you undertake to make certain VA is aware of, and responsive to, the needs of the veterans' community? How would you plan to engage with veterans' organizations?

I have a unique perspective on this topic as a Veteran, military spouse, daughter of a Veteran, and member of Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS and American Legion. I truly understand the importance of VA being responsive and collaborative with the needs of the Veterans community and the Veterans service organizations (VSOs) that represent them. I share Secretary McDonough's commitment to continuing to build a true partnership with our VSOs and the Veteran community. If confirmed, I would continue the Secretary's commitment to meeting regularly with VSOs. I will continue to build or rebuild trust with Veterans, reaching untethered Veterans – Veterans who have never come to VA before – and much of that depends on VA reaching out directly to Veterans where they are.

5. How would you continue to ensure members of Congress are advised in advance of problems, issues and emerging matters, particularly when those matters are specific to the area a member represents?

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. I share this Committee's and Congress' expectations of transparent and timely communications from VA. If I'm confirmed, I commit to maintain the same level of communication and transparency that we've seen under Secretary McDonough's leadership, and I commit to advising members in advance of emerging problems and issues as they arise.

6. What role do you see yourself playing in the management and oversight of the Electronic Health Record Management program?

If confirmed as Deputy Secretary, the bottom line is that I would be the VA leader responsible for the implementation of the Electronic Health Record (EHRM). I will take a hands-on approach and take

charge of deploying the Oracle Cerner EHRM, ensuring that it's optimized for use at the five current sites and only deploying to additional sites when it is fully ready. As someone who has served in the military, I understand the frustration and hassle of having to personally transport medical records to a Veteran service officer for VA claims processing. It's crucial that we provide our Veterans with the most seamless transition possible from military to civilian life while also ensuring that they have access to their complete medical history.

7. If confirmed, how would you use your role as the co-chair of the Joint Executive Committee to advance sharing and coordinating between the two Departments? What are your priorities?

The Joint Executive Council's (JEC) purpose is to promote beneficial coordination between VA and DOD to improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the delivery of benefits and services to Veterans, service members, military retirees, and their families. With that in mind, if confirmed, I would serve as the Co-chair of the JEC and prioritize the following issues:

1. Electronic Health Record (EHR) Interoperability
2. Pre-Separation Access to VA Benefits
3. Joint Sharing of Facilities and Services

8. Do you agree to supply the Committee with such non-privileged information, materials, and documents as may be requested by the Committee in its oversight and legislative capacities for so long as you serve in the position of Deputy Secretary?

Yes, I do.

Senator Blackburn
Questions for the Record
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Hearing To Consider the Nomination of Tanya J. Bradsher to be Deputy Secretary,
Department of Veterans Affairs
May 31, 2023

Questions for Nominee Bradsher:

- 1. Given that the EHRM contract extension is now in place and appropriately increases vendor accountability with significant increases in penalties and the addition of over twenty contractual service obligations, do you feel that the accountability on VA needs to be equally increased?**

If confirmed, I am committed to transparency and excellence in the EHR implementation, and that commitment includes increased accountability on VA to get this right. As the Secretary has said on numerous occasions, this is not a can do—this is a must do. VA will continue to engage congressional and other stakeholders with full and proactive transparency on VA's progress on the EHRM program. I value congressional oversight in holding VA accountable as we work to advance the access, outcomes, and excellence that Veterans deserve.

- a. Will you commit to driving equal accountability and transparency into VA?**

Yes, if confirmed I am fully committed to driving equal accountability and transparency into VA. My leadership approach involves going out, boots on the ground, to all five sites to do listening sessions with our clinicians. We have the opportunity with the EHRM program reset to make sure that we're able to incorporate those recommendations enterprise-wide. And ensure that we hold Oracle Cerner accountable to make sure those changes happen, and make sure we can scale to large facilities when deployments resume.

- b. If confirmed, what metrics would you put on VA to ensure accountability on your end?**

With the completion of the renegotiated Oracle Cerner contract, I am encouraged by what I see as an increase in VA's ability to hold the vendor accountable across a variety of key areas, including reliability (minimizing outages), responsiveness (quickly and reliably resolving tickets), interoperability with other health care systems, and interoperability with other applications. If confirmed, I would drive VA to apply these same areas of accountability within our own enterprise. One

example of this is with incident free time. VA has a goal of at least 95% incident free time—we have not yet met that goal but are moving in the right direction.

c. What changes would you make internally to drive accountability within VA?

For the past few years, we have not delivered the results that Veterans deserve. This reset changes that. I am committed to making sure we are not going to continue deployment activities at future sites during the reset; instead, we are going to take the time necessary to get this right for Veterans and VA clinicians alike, and that means focusing our resources solely on improving the EHR at the sites where it is currently in use and optimizing the fit of the EHR for VA more broadly. If confirmed, I would continue to focus on standardizing activities across VHA to optimize business processes, reduce user adoption issues and improve training and testing.

2. With an enterprise system, not all end-users and sites will be able to get what they would like in terms of changes. Currently, VA is good at compiling the feedback, but no one seems to be working through the lists to see if proposed changes are in fact needed or are consistent with not customizing the system and creating another Vista.

a. If confirmed, who in VA should be accountable for making and enforcing enterprise decisions and saying no to specific site customizations?

First and foremost, the Deputy Secretary is ultimately responsible for the EHR. If confirmed, that responsibility will fall on my shoulders. VA has to ensure that our Veterans get the record they need. VA clinicians have not seen the results of their comments come back and be executed within the EHR. VA has the opportunity with the reset to make sure that we are able to incorporate those recommendations enterprise-wide, because we can't have five different records. VA needs to implement enterprise-wide changes and ensure that we hold Oracle Cerner accountable to make sure those changes happen—only then can we scale to large facilities.

As part of the reset, VA is making sure that our clinicians know we will support them. Through Dr. Evans and the EHRM leadership team, we're starting to be able to address those proposed changes. As progress is made, I'm committed to keeping those open lines of communication, and making sure those five locations have the support that they need to be able to continue to execute and to take care of our Veterans, because that's the most important mission that we have.

3. There has been a lot of discussion on the costs of the EHR modernization effort. One of the main drivers of these costs is new requirements being added by VA.

a. If confirmed, what mechanisms would you rely on to control costs and ensure we are prioritizing dollars for enterprise capabilities and not the customized needs of every VA site?

I believe VA must be a responsible steward of taxpayer dollars. To ensure we are effectively managing requests for new requirements and not meeting the customized needs of every site, I am committed to continuing VA's efforts in establishing governance bodies and processes for clearer and more rapid decision-making. For example, one of the most impactful outputs of the Sprint was the establishment of VHA EHRM governance bodies and processes to ensure enterprise standardization and health system decision-making.

From a cost control perspective, I understand that VA notified Congress that the EHRM program will not be seeking the 25% funding withhold (totaling \$439,750,000) of the VA EHRM budget line for FY 2023 due to the overall program reset. Another mechanism to cost controls is the re-negotiated Oracle Cerner contract, which now includes stronger performance metrics and expectations, as well as larger monetary credits to VA if Oracle Cerner doesn't meet expectations. For example, if these new terms had been in place since the start of the contract, VA would have received approximately a 30-fold increase in credits for the system outages. And outage-free time is only one of the 28 performance metrics that are now built into the contract, so Oracle Cerner is heavily incentivized across the board to improve performance for Veterans and clinicians.

As part of the reset, I am committed to working with Congress on resource requirements for the agency's EHR Modernization efforts. When the reset period concludes, I would ensure that VA will update its EHR deployment schedule and program life cycle cost estimate and will provide an updated version to Congress once completed.

4. Senator Grassley' office has received multiple legally protected whistleblower disclosures related to the VA's Integrated Enterprise Workflow Solution (IEWS) system, which VA uses to manage and track its correspondence. The IEWS system is under your authority as VA's Chief of Staff.¹ Whistleblowers have provided records asserting that the system is used to store extremely sensitive information, including correspondence from members of Congress, confidential whistleblower information, personal identifiable information (PII), and protected veterans' medical

¹ Liberty IT Solutions, summary, VA integrated Enterprise Workflow Solution (IEWS) Salesforce Development (last accessed May 31, 2023) (noting that while operationally, correspondence management falls under the Office of the Secretary of the VA (OSVA) Secretariat (ExecSec), the IEWS system is under the authority of the Chief of Staff), <https://appexchange.salesforce.com/partners/servlet/servlet.FileDownload?file=00P3A00000iHXXiUAO>.

records and health information (PHI). The records illustrate that sensitive information is not being marked as sensitive and segregated from less sensitive documents in the system.²

The information is accessible to thousands of VA employees with access to VIEWS. These VIEWS users, according to whistleblowers, do not have to enter login credentials each time they access the system, and instead log in to the system once, with no dual factor authentication or other typical security measures to secure their access.

Emails show that your Deputy Chief of Staff, Maureen Elias, was made aware of serious security flaws in the VIEWS system in July 2022 by a certified fraud examiner.³ Moreover, the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) was apprised of a major security vulnerability and on August 2, 2022, OSC determined that there was a “substantial likelihood of wrongdoing” with respect to potential violation of federal privacy laws related to VIEWS.⁴ OSC ordered Secretary McDonough to launch an investigation and complete it within 60 days; however, it has yet to be completed.⁵ Based upon information from whistleblowers, the VIEWS system still has these serious security vulnerabilities, nearly a year after you were notified.⁶

- a. **Does VIEWS properly secure sensitive correspondence, PII, PHI, and whistleblower information? If not, why not? If so, please explain.**

I take the privacy of the Veterans, families, caregivers, and survivors that we serve extremely seriously and will continue to do everything in my power to protect it. I also take all whistleblower allegations seriously and will work with VA’s Office of Information and Technology (OIT) to take whatever steps are necessary to protect sensitive information, including developing dual factor authentication for VIEWS.

The Veterans Affairs Integrated Enterprise Workflow Solution (VIEWS) is a system implemented in 2018 to replace older processes and tools. It is used to manage various tasks, documents, and reports within the VA; however, it does not handle medical records, claims, benefits, or financial actions. Around 1,900 VA employees have access to VIEWS, which is a tiny fraction—less than half of one percent (0.05%)—of department employees.

² Records, including screenshots of the system, are on file with Committee staff.

³ Email from Peter Rizzo, Senior Program Manager, Quality Assurance Service, Office of Construction & Facilities Management, U.S. Dep’t of Veterans Affairs, to Ms. Maureen Elias, Deputy Chief of Staff, July 13, 2022, on file with Committee staff.

⁴ Letter from Leslie J. Gogan, Attorney, Disclosure Unit, Office of Special Counsel, to Mr. Peter Rizzo (August 2, 2022), on file with Committee staff.

⁵ According to OSC, they will apprise Mr. Rizzo when the report is complete, and they have yet to do so.

⁶ Statement by Peter Rizzo, *supra* n. 4; screenshots of recent sensitive information tagged not sensitive are on file with Committee staff.

VIEWS runs on a secure platform called Salesforce Government Cloud Plus, which has been approved by more than 40 federal agencies. The system is regularly checked by VA's Privacy Officer and Information System Security Officer to ensure the safety of sensitive information. These officials have issued annual Privacy Threshold Analysis (PTA) and Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) reports affirming that VIEWS is appropriate for sensitive information, including most recently in Fall 2022. VIEWS has been FedRAMP certified with an authorization date of November 2, 2020.

The VIEWS system has controls in place to protect personal and sensitive data, with only specific designated team members permitted to access sensitive cases. Any other user lacking permission who attempts to access a sensitive case cannot see the case information or attachments relating to the sensitive matter. All employees using VIEWS must complete mandatory training, and system access is logged. Audits also are done to make sure information on the VIEWS system is accessed appropriately. VA and Salesforce, the platform in which VIEWS is run, follow strict security and privacy guidelines in accordance with national standards and VA policies.

b. When did you first become aware that sensitive correspondence, PII, PHI, and whistleblower information stored on the VIEWS system was not being marked as sensitive and therefore available to all VA employees with access to VIEWS? Upon being made aware, when and what steps did you take to properly secure access?

I first became aware that there were concerns relating to the treatment of sensitive information on the VIEWS systems shortly after certain VA employees approached my Deputy Chief of Staff in July 2022. Upon receiving that information, I met with representatives of the Executive Secretariat, which is the VA unit responsible for overseeing use of the VIEWS system. As a result, VA has undertaken a number of measures to further strengthen protections of private and sensitive information in VIEWS, including security enhancements, limiting access, and improved training. I have been informed that, in particular, VA has done the following:

- i. In October 2022, the Managing Cases in VIEWS Case and Correspondence Management training course, one of the three video training courses required to obtain a VIEWS account, was updated to include a portion that addresses sensitive information. The video reminds users to mark a case sensitive if PHI, PII or Sensitive Personal Information (SPI) is recorded in the case. The training informs that PHI is health information in any form, including physical records, electronic records or spoken information. Several examples of PHI, PII and SPI are also presented within the training. Users also have the option to download a handout related to this training for their reference and future use.

- ii. In November 2022, there were several system enhancements and updates related to application privacy and security initiatives. Specifically, this release included changes to the security features dealing with access and visibility of sensitive cases and case tasks, making Case Sensitivity a required field when creating a case and only allowing Case Owners to change ownership on sensitive cases.

This release also included revisions to the banner messages displayed for sensitive cases and case tasks, the case sensitivity help text and defect fixes to these messages identified in lower testing environments. Additionally, this release included updates to Congressional Letters case types to include defaulting to sensitive when a case is created and revisions to the banner message displayed when case sensitivity is set to Pending Review. Finally, this release included sustainment remediation fixes so that VIEWS processes remain current and up-to-date to meet ongoing Salesforce development standards.

- iii. On December 7, 2022, VIEWS Office Coordinator (VOC) were informed that each Program Office and Administration could have no more than three VA employees identified as a VOC; and reminded of the importance of proper handling sensitive cases/information in VIEWS. VOCs are responsible for sharing relevant information they receive with their VIEWS users. This is related to a March 2022 requirement for VIEWS Office Coordinators to ensure that their roster of VIEWS account users is accurate. A quarterly review of each VOC's user roster is conducted, and accounts of users who have either moved to a different office or left the VA altogether are removed. Twice a year these reports must also be reviewed and verified by all Administrations' and Staff Offices' Chiefs of Staff.

VOCs also were reminded that accounts with no activity after 90 days would be deactivated, and they were also provided a new additional step for reactivating an account after it is deactivated due to inactivity. VOCs are required to obtain approval from the Program Office's or Administration's Chief of Staff before submitting a request to reactivate a recently deactivated account.

- iv. To further enhance the security of VIEWS and access, the Department is implementing the following in June-July 2023:
- Accounts will be deactivated after 45 days of inactivity versus 90 days and will still require Program Office's or Administration's Chief of Staff approval for reactivation (effective June 26, 2023), and
 - Potential new users requesting a VIEWS account must meet three role-based criteria and their first-line supervisor must approve the new account request (effective July 10, 2023).
- v. The Department also has been exploring the feasibility of adding two-step authentication when logging into VIEWS.

Also, on August 2, 2022, VA received a letter from the Office of Special Counsel referring for investigation the allegations raised regarding VIEWS. The OSC letter also was provided to the Office of Inspector General which, after making initial inquiries, declined to open an investigation. VA also briefed House Veterans Affairs Committee staff on the VIEWS systems and issues concerning its protections for private and sensitive information. Finally, VA designated its Office of Information and Technology (OIT) to investigate the allegations raised by OSC. VA currently expects this OIT investigative report relating to VIEWS to be submitted to OSC by August 1, 2023. I look forward to receiving OIT's recommendations and will ensure their recommended changes are promptly implemented.

- c. **When you became aware of the apparently major security vulnerabilities in VIEWS, did you request a forensic investigation or audit be conducted to determine whether the information may have been misused? If so, when did you request it, and what were the results? If not, why not?**

Within weeks of my first being informed of the concerns raised about VIEWS, VA received the OSC letter which addressed the same issues. In accordance with that letter, VA designated OIT to conduct an investigation into the allegations. I have had no responsibility for, or role in, overseeing the OIT investigation of these VIEWS issues. In light of the ongoing OIT investigation, I did not request a forensic investigation or audit.

- i. **Are you aware of any specific incidents of whistleblower retaliation, doxing, identity fraud, or any other negative consequence to individuals that may be linked to information in VIEWS being accessed inappropriately? If so, what steps did you take in response to this knowledge?**

No.

- ii. **When were you notified of the July 2022 complaint about the security vulnerabilities in the VIEWS system?**

See response to Question 4b above.

- iii. **In detail, what steps did you take after learning of this complaint to investigate or remedy the security flaws identified? When were these steps taken?**

See response to Question 4b above.

- iv. **Are the security flaws identified in July 2022 still present in the VIEWS system? If so, why have they not been fixed or use of the VIEWS system for storage of sensitive information suspended until they are?**

I defer to the results of the OIT investigation, conducted at OSC request, regarding whether there are security flaws in the VIEWS system that have not been remedied.

v. What is the status of the investigation of the VIEWS system ordered by OSC?

I have been told that OIT expects to submit the results of its investigation into the VIEWS allegations to OSC by August 1, 2023.

vi. Have you been interviewed or in any way consulted in this investigation?

No.

vii. Why has the VA requested extensions from OSC to complete the VIEWS investigation, and what interim steps have been taken to remove or secure sensitive data on the VIEWS system?

I have had no responsibility for, or role in, overseeing the OIT investigation of these VIEWS issues and am not aware of why VA has requested extensions from OSC to complete the VIEWS investigation.

viii. Does VA have a data governance strategy in place? If not, why not?

I have been informed that VA developed an Enterprise Data Strategy in January 2021. The Office of Enterprise Integration (OEI), in coordination with the VA's Data Governance Council (DGC), published a Data Management Directive, which establishes VA policy and defines roles and responsibilities for data governance and management throughout the Department. The Directive mandates that all data will be inventoried, cataloged, and systematically available for responsible sharing consistent with VA's I CARE core values, law and policy, VA Data Guiding Principles, and VA's Ethical Principles for Access to and Use of Veteran Data. The Directive emphasizes data protection, privacy and confidentiality; aligns with the appropriate standards and architectures; and ensures visibility of its quality and permitted uses. The Enterprise Data Strategy builds on the Directive and sets the vision for VA to leverage data as a strategic asset. Managing VA's data as a strategic asset across its lifecycle, via the framework set in this strategy, is the necessary precondition to further strengthen VA's delivery of services and benefits to the Nation's Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors.

VA also has established a Data Governance Council (DGC) under the VA Operations Board (VAOB) to ensure use of agency data as a strategic asset and supports the Secretary's strategic goals to improve the lives of Veterans, caregivers, and their families. DGC is VA's primary organization charged with directing the process of setting and enforcing priorities for managing and using data as a strategic asset.

- ix. **If these serious security flaws have been allowed to exist unremediated in the system under your authority for so long, why should the Senate confirm you to a position where you will be in charge of the modernization of veterans' electronic health records (EHR), which contain sensitive PII and PHI?**

I take the privacy of the Veterans, families, caregivers, and survivors that we serve extremely seriously and will continue to do everything in my power to protect it. I was informed that the VIEWS system was thoroughly analyzed for privacy and security concerns before it was implemented in 2018. It has been subject to annual reviews and repeatedly been certified by the VA's Privacy Officer and Information System Security Officer. Following the concerns about the VIEWS system being brought to my attention, VA has taken substantial steps to improve and enhance the security and privacy protections of the VIEWS system. And if confirmed as Deputy Secretary, I commit to carefully reviewing the OIT and OSC review and taking whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the confidentiality of PHI, PII, whistleblower, and other sensitive information is properly protected.

5. **A report issued by VA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) in 2021 calls into question the appropriateness of storing sensitive information on the Salesforce system, which is the platform on which VIEWS is hosted.⁷ Unless VA has taken appropriate technical steps to assure the Salesforce platform used for VIEWS complies with official industry and government standards for high-risk data, this may mean that even if appropriate sensitivity tags are applied within VIEWS, the system still would not be secure enough to store PHI, PII, and other sensitive data.**

- a. **Are you aware of this OIG report and its analysis of the relative security of the Salesforce platform? When did you become aware?**

I was aware of this OIG report at approximately the time that it was issued in 2021.

- b. **With respect to the OIG's findings in its 2021 report, has the VA proactively applied those findings in that report to fix security shortcomings in VIEWS?**

VA has satisfactorily addressed all of the OIG's recommendations in the 2021 report, with the OIG having closed all of these recommendations. It also is my understanding from OIT personnel that none of the OIG report's findings indicate any security shortcomings in VIEWS.

⁷ Dep't of Veterans Affairs, Office of Inspector General, Office of Audits and Evaluations, Veterans Health Administration, Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers: IT System Development Challenges Affect Expansion, Report #20-00178-24 (June 8, 2021), <https://www.va.gov/oig/pubs/VAOIG-20-00178-24.pdf>.

- c. Has VA taken appropriate steps to make sure the Salesforce application used for VIEWS has sufficient security to store PII, PHI, whistleblower information, and other sensitive correspondence? If so, what steps were taken, and when were they taken? If not, why not?**

I am informed that, as noted above, Salesforce is a FedRAMP High Baseline account which supports the government's most sensitive, unclassified data in cloud computing environments, including data that involves the protection of life and finances. FedRAMP is a United States federal government-wide compliance program that provides a standardized approach to security assessment, authorization, and continuous monitoring for cloud products and services. VIEWS has an Authority To Operate (ATO) at a Minor Application Moderate with Privacy based on Security and NIST standards. In light of the VIEWS ATO, there was no requirement to remediate any security shortcomings since ATO is a clearance that VA gives to business partners who meet strident VA standards to develop systems, products, and processes for VA use. VA ATO reflects that all applicable security standards are met and that sensitive information is protected.

- d. Does the VIEWS system meet industry and federal standards for the storage of PII, PHI, and other sensitive data, including standards set by the National Institute of Standards and Technology for storage of PII and PHI? If not, why not?**

I am informed by VA OIT that the VIEWS system is fully compliant with industry and federal standards, including VA HDBK 6500, NIST SP 800-53, Security and Privacy Controls for Federal Information Systems and Organizations. See also response to Question 4a above.

- e. If VIEWS does not comply with these standards, in detail, what concrete steps have you or other relevant VA officials ordered to bring it into compliance?**

VIEWS complies with these standards.

Sen. Cramer
Questions for the Record
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Nomination of Tanya J. Bradsher to be Deputy Secretary for the Department of Veterans Affairs
May 31, 2023

Questions for Tanya J. Bradsher, Nominee for Deputy Secretary

1. **Ms. Bradsher, as you know, a key role of the legislative branch is to ensure consistent oversight of federal agency activity. One critical step in conducting such oversight is the transparent sharing of information by agency staff to Members of Congress. If confirmed, do you commit to providing timely responses and assistance to inquiries from my office?**

Yes Senator, if confirmed, I commit to providing timely responses and assistance to inquiries to your office.

2. **A consistent priority of mine is expanding access to timely health care services for our nation's veterans. One important program at your disposal is the Veterans Community Care Program, modernized by the VA MISSION Act to provide veterans with additional choice in how and where they receive health care services. How can the VA better support the ability of eligible veterans to more freely utilize the Veterans Community Care Program? Additionally, do you commit to opposing any changes to the community care access standards that could harm veteran's access to health care services?**

Providing Veterans with timely access to high quality health care is absolutely essential and our non-VA providers play a crucial role in delivering care and providing more choices in health care options for Veterans. Non-VA providers bring expertise and resources that support the services and health care VA provides to Veterans. If confirmed, I will work with VHA to ensure that veterans who are eligible to use Community Care have as few barriers as possible to access that care. I'm committed to finding solutions to ensure effective coordination with our community providers and adapting services to meet the needs of Veterans. If confirmed, I commit to oppose any changes that would harm veteran's access to health care services.

3. **I along with Senator Ossoff led the REMOVE Copays Act, legislation which allows veterans to attain copay-free mental health and substance abuse care for their first three outpatient visits each year. This provision was included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, and signed into Law December 2022. What is the status of implementation of this bill? Have there been any challenges the Department has experienced as part of the implementation?**

Senator, if confirmed, I will ensure that the REMOVE Copays Act is fully enacted. Due to the need for complex IT enhancements and interface of both current legacy VistA systems and Oracle Cerner Millennium, there will be a delay in VA implementation of the new benefit to provide 3 free mental health outpatient visits per calendar year by June 27, 2023. However, IT enhancements are under way that will allow VA to implement the benefit within the VistA

system as early as March 2024. Benefits will be applied retroactive to June 27, 2023. In order to implement by March 2024, initial application of benefits will be conducted manually until full automation of both legacy VistA and Oracle Cerner Millennium systems are developed and nationally released.

4. **As mental health continues to be a primary focus of the VA, we should encourage the inclusion of innovative approaches to treatment for conditions including Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). One such therapy is Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT), which has been an emerging treatment across North Dakota and the country. We should be expanding access to this treatment option as I've seen firsthand the benefits it has delivered for patients and veterans in North Dakota. If confirmed, how will you work to expand access to innovative therapies such as HBOT?**

If confirmed, I would work with you and your office on ways to expand access to effective innovative therapies and approaches for Veterans whole-health. After meeting with you in-person I understand that HBOT is a priority for you, and I will work with the Under Secretary of Health to determine ways that HBOT and similar therapies could be expanding, as appropriate.

5. **We've received reports of significantly delayed reimbursement for veterans traveling to receive approved VA health care appointments. Are you aware of this issue and what is your plan for improving response time? Do you committee to working through the purported backlog?**

Veterans should be reimbursed timely for their travel expenses associated with approved VA health care appointments. If confirmed, I will work with VHA leadership to ensure that we have a system in place to reimburse our Veterans.

Sen. Moran
Questions for the Record
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Nomination of Tanya Bradsher to be Deputy Secretary
May 31, 2023

Questions for Tanya Bradsher

1. Ms. Bradsher, I sincerely appreciated your sworn commitment to transparency and responsiveness with all Members of Congress at the May 31 hearing to consider your nomination to be the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) next Deputy Secretary. My Committee staff have a number of outstanding requests for information into the Department. Would you please review the following and provide an updated response timeline and justification for the delays? As you have served as Chief of Staff at the Department for the past two years and we have encountered substantial delays in our requests for information during that time period, how will the VA become more responsive with Congress if you are confirmed as Deputy Secretary?

Ranking Member Moran, I agree that that VA must be timelier on the Department's congressional correspondence and requests for information. If confirmed, I would hold the Deputies of each the administrations and departments accountable for timely testimony, requests for information, letters and general inquiries from Congress.

- a. Since December 2022, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee republican (SVAC-R) staff have been requesting guidance and training materials that have been provided to VA staff and community care providers regarding the reproductive health service interim final rule (IFR) and any other materials used to assist VA staff or community care providers in determining whether or not to refer a veteran or CHAMPVA beneficiary for an abortion under the IFR. Unfortunately, these materials still have not been provided to the Committee, without explanation. As these materials provide active guidance throughout VHA and have been in implementation for nearly six months, please provide them immediately. In addition,
 - i. Since implementation of the IFR how many abortions has VA facilitated, either at a VA medical facility or in the community?
 - ii. In what states were the abortions performed?
 - iii. How many Veterans Care Agreements include provisions related to abortion services? In which states are the providers encompassed by these agreements practicing?

- iv. For each of the abortions performed pursuant to the IFR, which of the four exception categories laid out in the rule were used?
- v. How many VA staff have requested a reasonable accommodation to allow them to opt out of executing any actions pursuant to the IFR due to moral, religious, or other reasons? Of those, how many requests have been approved?

Ranking Member Moran, it is my understanding that on June 8th, 2023, VA provided your office with information about the number of total abortions that VA has provided, as well as a breakdown of these abortions by exception. For all the reasons that are outlined in the letter to Chairman Mike Bost dated May 26, 2023, which has been shared with your office, the Secretary has determined that VA is currently unable to provide some of the other detailed information that you seek.

With respect to the number of reasonable accommodations, I am told that there was a data collection done through local facility coordinators on March 22, 2023. The result was: VISNs had in-total received 519 employee requests to be excused from abortion related care as of that date and no requests had been denied.

- b. The SVAC-R office received multiple inquiries from Hannon Act SSG Fox Grant Program recipients since March 2023 about the lack of an updated program guide. This guide was promised to grant recipients in March 2023. In March, we also requested a copy of the updated guide. We are extremely disappointed, as are the grantees, as they are trying to administer a key federal grant, without updated guidance. Please ensure this guide is completed and sent to the grantees, and my committee staff, as soon as possible.

Yes, I understand your request and will ensure the guide is completed and sent to grantees, you, and your committee staff as soon as possible.

- c. On May 9, I joined with Chairman Tester and House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bost and Ranking Member Takano in requesting unredacted copies of all Administrative Investigative Board (AIB) reports, fact findings, and other investigations conducted at the Black Hills Health Care System from January 1, 2021, to present. The findings in two recent related reports published by the Office of Inspector General are deeply troubling and Congress cannot perform its oversight function without a full disclosure of the facts. It is our understanding that the AIBs in question have been complete, yet, they have still not been provided to the Committees.

I will ensure VA shares these AIB reports with your office without delay

- 2. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) issued a Management Advisory Memorandum on March 14, 2023. The advisory alerts the Department to its outdated, and yet still mandatory policies governing the minimum clinical requirements for mental health services across the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). In 2008, VHA published Handbook 1160.01, Uniform Mental Health Services in VA Medical Centers and Clinics. Despite a requirement for recertification every five years, nearly 15 years have passed and the mandatory policy has not been recertified. This mandatory policy does not include the latest guidelines for the management of posttraumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, and the management of patients at risk for suicide.**

- a. What is VHA’s plan to update this guidance and in the absence of this formal guidance, how does VHA ensure consistency in high quality mental health care across the Administration?**

I agree that Veterans should have access the latest proven medical policies, especially mental health policies. If confirmed, I will work with Under Secretary Elnahal and the Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention to ensure that mental health policies are updated appropriately and that guidance is communicated broadly. I will also work to ensure quality orientation sessions are conducted about this guidance with providers and various stakeholder groups so that VA is delivering the highest quality of evidence-based mental health services to Veterans.

- b. Since 2015, the Government Accountability Office has designated the VA as a high-risk government program, finding “ambiguous VA policies lead to inconsistency in the way its facilities carry out processes at the local level, which may pose risks for veterans’ access to VA health care, or for the quality and safety of VA health care.” As Deputy Secretary, how will you steer the Department towards the adoption of consistency in policy guidance as well as consistency in the implementation of policy guidance?**

As Chief of Staff, I sat on the major governance bodies stood up by Secretary McDonough— the VA Operations Board (VAOB) and VA Executive Board (VAEB). These bodies are composed of VA senior leaders, subject matter experts and field leaders charged with enterprise-wide visibility on major decisions and initiatives, including proposed policy changes, as well as informational briefings on strategic priorities and timely matters. Those long-standing challenges identified by GAO — efficiency, consistent policy, and overall processes— are at

the very heart of VAOB and VAEB. If confirmed as Deputy Secretary, I would chair the VAOB and commit to bringing together local representation on these entities to close any deltas between the field and headquarters, exercise jointness and execute clear policy guidance.

If confirmed, I will also prioritize my current efforts with regularly convening VA's chief human capital officers across the enterprise to focus on implementing PACT Act workforce authorities under Title IX— bringing local and regional feedback to the table— and continue to prioritize improving hiring and onboarding processes and experiences for new employees.

Lastly, I commit that addressing challenges and recommendations identified by GAO, including the areas on the high-risk list, will be a priority of mine, as it has been for this Secretary. Both GAO and Congressional oversight on these matters help VA better serve Veterans.

- 3. While you served as Chief of Staff, the Department decided to cease use of Section 714 disciplinary authority on April 3, 2023, due to recent rulings from the Federal Labor Relations Authority, the Merit Systems Protection Board, and the Federal Circuit. Will you provide the Committee with data pertaining to employee removal actions taken by the Department in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019? Before the recent rulings curtailed use of Section 714 authority, I am interested in reviewing whether or not use of the authority had the intended impact of expediting removal processes from those occurring before passage of the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017.**

Given the limited number of covered VA employees and the few practical differences between section 714 and traditional title 5 adverse action authorities as a result of recent administrative and federal court decisions, VA chose to cease using section 714. A review of adverse action data indicates VA has consistently used all available authorities to hold employees accountable. Adverse actions are personnel actions coded in VAs Human Resources System of Records as a removal, termination, suspension, change to lower grade or resignation/retirement in lieu of involuntary action:

	FY16*	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22
Total Adverse Actions	4,530	5,314	5,952	5,653	5,694	4,673	4,068

*FY16 count is incomplete as HR-Smart did not fully deploy until 06/12/2016.

VA has, and will continue to, employ other authorities, i.e., 5 U.S.C. Chapters 43 and 75, to appropriately suspend, demote and remove employees to hold them accountable for performance and conduct deficiencies. VA will also continue to use sections of the Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017 (P.L. 115-41), such as: the authority to recoup awards, bonuses and relocation expenses in accordance with sections 721 and 723; the process for taking action involving senior leaders as outlined in section 713; and protection of whistleblowers in accordance with section 732.

Senator Sinema
Questions for the Record
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Hearing to Consider a Pending Nomination
05/31/23

Questions for Tanya J. Bradsher

1. The suicide rate for Arizona's Veterans is significantly higher than in the rest of the country, with the number of outpatient mental health visits doubling since 2006. If confirmed, what role do you hope to take in ensuring Veterans have access to reliable and effective mental health resources?

Senator, as a Veteran myself nothing is more important to me than preventing Veteran suicide. It is our top clinical priority at VA. I know that suicide is preventable, and each of us has a role to play in suicide prevention. I believe VA must be there for Veterans when it matters most, especially in times of crisis.

If confirmed, I would work with Under Secretary Elnahal and your office to see what hiring initiatives that we have under recently enacted laws that would help Arizona and the rest of the country recruit and retain mental health clinicians. Additionally, I will see what additional resources are needed to expand our local community coalitions in Arizona and beyond that would help reach more Veterans. Veterans need and deserve suicide prevention solutions that meet them where they are, rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach. I would also work to continue implementing the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program which aims to reduce Veteran suicide through a three-year community-based grant program by awarding grants to eligible entities to provide or coordinate suicide prevention services to eligible individuals and their families.

2. It is clear from your career and prepared remarks that Veteran health is very personal to you, coming from a military family and having served yourself. With each passing year, Arizona is seeing a growing number of women Veterans and an overall more diverse Veteran population with unique needs. Can you talk more about the role you would take, if confirmed, in making sure that no Veteran is left behind?

Building and rebuilding trust among our Veteran population is one of my top priorities. We need to vigorously reach our Veterans who have had negative experiences with the VA or who have never filed for their hard earned benefits. We have to use social media platforms in new ways and break out of the Veteran channels to reach those untethered Veterans. In my experience, the women Veterans who I have engaged with, greatly minimize their military

service to our country. I have had women Veterans tell me – “I use to be a Veteran”, “my husband served 20 years and I only served 4”, or “the PACT Act is for older Veterans, not me”. As Chief of Staff, I have had success in engaging my fellow women Veterans and challenging them to file for their benefits. If given the opportunity to serve as Deputy Secretary, I believe that I use that platform to reach even more women Veterans.

3. I have found throughout my career in Senate that an ability to work with members of both parties is absolutely critical for success. Can you please elaborate on your willingness to engage in bipartisan cooperation, build relationships, and find common ground to address the diverse needs and concerns of our Veterans?

I have proudly served in the military under Republican and Democratic leadership. I appreciate that taking care of our Nation’s Veterans is a bipartisan responsibility. If confirmed to serve as Deputy Secretary, I would work with members on both sides of the aisle to serve all Veterans.

4. As chief of the staff, you are intimately aware of the challenges facing the VA, one of which being staffing shortages. These shortages have implications for the quality and timeliness of care we are able to provide to our Veterans. Can you please outline your strategies and approaches to tackling staffing shortages, if confirmed?

Senator, I agree, we must retain and recruit our clinical staff to provide the best care and benefits for our Veterans. That means hiring, supporting, and retaining the great VA public servants who make that happen is vital. Secretary McDonough often says that VA’s workforce is our number one asset, and he has made clear time and again that investing in VA employees is our top strategic priority. If confirmed, I would work with VA leadership to ensure that we are fully implementating all our hiring authorities and that we are aggressive in our hiring and retention efforts. Additionally, a key focus of mine would be to work with VA leadership and this committee to help remove or reduce any barriers and delays in the hiring and onboarding process.

Senator Dan Sullivan
Questions for the Record
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Hearing to Consider a Pending Nomination
Wednesday, May 31, 2023

Questions for Tanya Bradsher, Nominee to be Deputy Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs

1. Congratulations on your nomination. If you are nominated, you will oversee many programs, including the VA Burial Benefits program. Our veteran cemeteries serve the important role of honoring the lives of veterans after their death. The community in Fairbanks, Alaska has a significant veteran population and they have been trying to develop a national veteran's cemetery to honor their veterans for many years. They have been working to obtain funding, but would benefit from federal assistance. Will you commit to helping them identify and obtain funding for their cemetery?

Senator, if confirmed, I commit to working with the community to help determine the best options for providing Veterans in the Fairbanks area with reasonable access to a burial option

Senator Tillis
Questions for the Record
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
The Nomination of Tanya J. Bradsher to be Deputy Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs
31 MAY 2023

Questions for Tanya Bradsher, Nominee to be Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs

- 1. You've been nominated to be the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, which is often referred to as VA's Chief Operating Office, who is responsible for directing organization and policy for three large Administration's within the VA. Your background is primarily in the communications/ public affairs space. Can you describe how your experience as a communications professional qualifies you to be the next Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs?**

I served in the Army for 20 years, both as a Human Resources Officer and Public Affairs Officer. I have commanded two companies, deployed to Iraq, and served on the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff and Secretary of Defense's staff. After retiring from the Army, I have served at the White House, Department of Homeland Security, and the Defense Health Agency. I have served as Chief of Staff for three and half years both on the Hill and at the VA where I have had to lead personnel and implement policy. I believe that my extensive communication background has helped me articulate complicated policy initiatives to external and internal audiences.

- 2. During your time as Chief of Staff of the Department of Veterans Affairs, you have been responsible for signing off on correspondence, specifically congressional inquiries. How long does it take you to review, for example, hearing testimony?**

Yes, I do review most hearing testimony as part of the concurrence process. I usually take a few hours to 24 hours to review.

- 3. As the former Chief of Staff to a Member of Congress, you have a unique perspective in understanding the importance of congressional oversight. I'm sure during your time as Chief of Staff, you had to deal with delays in receiving responses from federal agencies. What do you plan to do to increase efficiencies and timeliness to congressional correspondence?**

Senator, I agree that that VA must be timelier on the Department's congressional correspondence. If confirmed, I would hold the Deputies of each the administrations and departments accountable for timely testimony.

- 4. Has an employee ever approached you alleging a hostile work environment caused by senior officials? How did you resolve it?**

As a servant-leader, I believe it essential to make myself available to all employees to speak freely and honestly, and to foster an environment where employees feel comfortable sharing information with me to include reporting a hostile work environment. Employees have

approached me in the past with such information to include reporting an alleged hostile work environment. I treat these reports with the utmost seriousness. In cases where there are concerns about unlawful activity, potential violations of rules or regulations, fraud, waste, and abuse, or retaliation for raising these types of concerns, I have and will continue to contact the appropriate independent investigatory body, which may include organizations such as the VA Office of Inspector General, VA Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection (OAWP), or U.S Office of Special Counsel.

5. Can you describe at least three issues you would prioritize, should you be confirmed?

If confirmed, my first priority will be to focus on transition and ensure that our military service members have access to all the tools they need before they depart the service. My success on this priority would be measured by whether more transitioning service members have access to more of VA tools before departing the military.

Second, I will lead the deployment of the electronic health record system focusing first on the original five sites and only deploying to additional sites when it is fully ready. My success on this priority would be measured by completion of the improvements needed at the five sites and the electronic health record is successfully deployed.

And third, I will continue to build trust with Veterans. I want to ensure that VA is reaching untethered Veterans and getting them care and benefits they deserve. My success on this priority would be measured by whether more Veterans are getting more timely care and benefits than ever before.

6. You have stated that you will prioritize the deployment of the electronic health record system. Can you elaborate on how you will lead the Electronic Health Record Modernization deployment?

If confirmed as Deputy Secretary, the bottom line is that I would be the VA leader responsible for the implementation of the Electronic Health Record (EHRM). I will take a hands-on, "boots-on-the-ground" approach and take charge of deploying the Oracle Cerner EHRM, ensuring that it's optimized for use at the five current sites and only deploying to additional sites when it is fully ready. I would travel to all five sites with leaders from Electronic Health Record Modernization Integration Office (EHRM-IO) and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) hosting listening sessions with our Veterans and clinicians to understand the challenges they are facing with the Oracle Cerner record. I would also meet with Oracle Cerner leadership regularly to hold them accountable and to ensure that the contractor has a n acute understanding of VA's needs in a system and that the Veterans and VA staff feedbacks are swiftly incorporated into improvements.

7. **In your pre-hearing questions, you stated that one of your accomplishments was that you are the Secretary's representative for VA's Homeless Veteran Program. Can you describe what that means and how does it qualify as experience to be the Deputy Secretary? How did that position differ from the role of the VHA Executive Director of Homeless Programs?**

Senator, as the Office of the Secretary's representative and enterprise coordinator for Homeless Veterans, I have served as the Secretary's representative on VA's federal advisory boards for Homeless Veterans. I have worked closely with the VHA Executive Director of Homeless Programs, the General Council, and Asset Enterprise Management to work through solutions that allowed the Greater Los Angeles to accept tiny homes on the VA campus. I hold bi-monthly meetings to ensure that the Secretary's Homeless goals are met and work through and/or elevate any issues that could negatively impact reaching VA's annual Homeless goals. Last year, we hosted our top 20 cities for summit in the Washington DC to share best practices and look to do the same this year. The VHA Executive Director of the Homeless Program Office (HPO) reports to the Under Secretary of Health (USH) with a direct mission to assist Veterans and their families in obtaining permanent and sustainable housing with access to high quality care and supportive services.

Sen. Moran
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Nomination of Tanya Bradsher to be Deputy Secretary
June 15, 2023

Questions for Tanya Bradsher

Ms. Bradsher, I appreciated your timely responses to the Questions for the Record submitted by the Members of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee following the May 31 hearing to consider your nomination to be the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) next Deputy Secretary. I have additional questions regarding the VA's Integrated Enterprise Workflow Solution (IEWS) system.

- 1. You mentioned first becoming aware that there were concerns relating to the treatment of sensitive information on the IEWS systems shortly after certain VA employees approached your Deputy Chief of Staff in July 2022.**

In an email exchange with your Deputy Chief of Staff in July 2022, a VA employee specifically stated, "My safety is at risk. Since this [IEWS issue] has been discovered I have been extremely stressed and am not sleeping well. My bank account was compromised approximately a year ago and money was stolen from me . . . I am scared to death knowing that everything I reported – 76 case files worth, is on full display for everyone in IEWS to see . . ." In the same email chain, your Deputy Chief of Staff fully acknowledged another VA employee's note that included "anyone with IEWS access can find this information on _____, leaving the door open to her continued harassment and doxing," and that "we suspect this has already happened to _____."

However, you responded to committee questions stating that you are not aware of any specific incident of negative consequence to individuals that may be linked to information in IEWS being accessed inappropriately. Were you not made aware of the detail noted above? If not, how were you made aware of concerns relating to the treatment of sensitive information on the IEWS system after VA employees approached your Deputy Chief of Staff in July 2022?

I first became aware that there were concerns about the IEWS systems shortly after certain VA employees approached the Deputy Chief of Staff in July 2022. However, I was not informed at that time or in subsequent conversations about any issues with specific individuals' information, nor was I ever told that any individual's private or sensitive information had been improperly accessed on IEWS.

- 2. After receiving a letter from the Office of Special Counsel on August 2, 2022, referring for investigation the allegations raised regarding IEWS, on what date did the Office of Inspector General inform the VA of its decision to decline to open an investigation?**

VA was informed that the OIG declined to take the case on September 8, 2022.

3. **After receiving a letter from the Office of Special Counsel on August 2, 2022, referring for investigation the allegations raised regarding VIEWS, on what date did the VA designate its Office of Information and Technology (OIT) to investigate the allegations? Who made this decision? To what extent were you involved in the decision-making process? Do you know why the decision was made to delegate the investigation to OIT rather than to your office, which bears ultimate responsibility for VIEWS?**

The investigation requested by OSC was assigned to OIT on September 9, 2022. This decision was based on the nature of the allegations, which concerned whether the VIEWS system comported with federal law and agency directives relating to the protection of private and sensitive information. OIT had expertise with the technology as well as the relevant laws and policies. OIT also had experience conducting investigations on behalf of OSC in the past. Accordingly, VA believed that OIT was best situated to conduct a review of the VIEWS system, and so it assigned this investigation to OIT.

4. **The same employees who raised concerns with your Deputy Chief of Staff detailed above, report that there has been no follow up from your office, nearly a year later, and that the information they requested to be protected remains openly accessible to nearly 2,000 VIEWS users.**

Shortly after the Deputy Chief of Staff was contacted, we received a letter from the Office of Special Counsel referring for investigation the allegations raised regarding VIEWS. Following the assignment of this investigation to OIT, I expected the OIT to interview the employees who raised concerns and to keep those employees apprised, as appropriate, regarding the investigation. Also, if any sensitive information of these employees was not being properly protected by the VIEWS system, I would expect that to be immediately addressed and promptly remedied as part the OIT investigation.

- a. **Did you direct anyone to follow up with the concerned employees to learn more about their concerns?**

i. **If so, who did you assign and when? Please provide documentation.**

ii. **If not, why not?**

My Deputy Chief of Staff had several conversations with the employees who raised issues about VIEWS in Summer 2022, in which she learned more about their allegations. However, within weeks, the allegations were assigned to OIT for investigation, and it was our understanding that the OIT investigators would interview these employees and address their concerns.

- b. **Did you direct anyone to make sure that those concerns were addressed as soon as possible?**

i. **If so, who did you assign and when? Please provide documentation.**

ii. If not, why not?

As I have previously explained, soon after allegations were raised with the Deputy Chief of Staff, I met with representatives of the Executive Secretariat, which is the VA unit responsible for overseeing use of the VIEWS system. We discussed the importance of ensuring that the VIEWS system protected private and sensitive information, and I directed Executive Secretariat to work to further strengthen such protections. As a result, VA has undertaken a number of measures over the past year to improve the privacy and security of VIEWS, including security enhancements, limiting access, and improved training.

c. Did you direct anyone to follow up with the concerned employees after addressing their concerns?

i. If so, who did you assign and when? Please provide documentation.

ii. If not, why not?

As discussed in response to question 4 above, following the assignment of the investigation of the employees' allegations to OIT, I deferred to that investigation and expected the OIT investigators to be in regular contact with those employees who had raised allegations.

d. Did you follow up with anyone assigned with these responsibilities?

i. If so, who did you follow up with and when? Please provide documentation.

I have had no responsibility for, or role in, overseeing the OIT investigation of these VIEWS issues and have had no contact with the OIT investigators.

e. What actions will you now take to follow-up with the employees referenced?

Again, it would be my expectation that the employees who raised the allegations – some of whom have left VA – have been in regular contact with the OIT investigators and have been kept apprised of the investigation of their allegations, as appropriate. I would note that since the OIT was designated to investigate these allegations, these employees have not reached out to my office with questions or concerns. However, when the OIT investigation is completed, I anticipate OSC and/or VA will contact these employees to inform them of the outcome.

f. What actions will you take to ensure that no other employee who raises serious concerns with your office fails to receive an appropriate response?

I greatly value and appreciate when employees bring specific concerns forward and take all of their allegations seriously. As was done in this case, I will help ensure that their

allegations are fairly and thoroughly investigated. I also will ensure that employees who report concerns are not subject to any retaliation or adverse consequences for their having raised concerns.

5. **After you first became aware that there were concerns relating to the treatment of sensitive information on the VIEWS systems, you stated that you met with representatives of the Executive Secretariat, “the VA unit responsible for overseeing use of the VIEWS system.” You note that “as a result [of that meeting], VA has undertaken a number of measures to further strengthen protections of private and sensitive information in VIEWS, including security enhancements, limiting access, and improving training.” You also noted that you did not request a forensic audit because VA, “within weeks of my first being informed of the concerns raised about VIEWS,” received an OSC letter ordering VA to investigate.**

- a. **When did you meet with the Executive Secretariat about this issue? Did you request the meeting or was it a regularly scheduled meeting? If you requested it, when did you do so?**

I first met with representatives of the Executive Secretariat about this VIEWS issue in mid-July 2022. I regularly meet on a weekly basis with the Executive Secretariat to discuss a host of issues. Over the past year, Executive Secretariat has periodically informed me during these meetings about the steps it has been taking to further strengthen the protection of sensitive information in the VIEWS system.

- b. **Was the sole topic of the meeting the VIEWS system data security issues identified by the employee outreach to your Deputy Chief of Staff?**

I do not recall.

- c. **What specific information did you share? Did you specifically request that the Executive Secretariat take measures to further strengthen the protection of private and sensitive information in VIEWS in this meeting? Why or why not?**

While I do not recall the specifics of this initial meeting, over the past year I have discussed and supported the Executive Secretariat in taking various measures to further strengthen protections of private and sensitive information in VIEWS. As noted in my previous responses, a number of such improvements have been implemented over the past year. See Response to Senator Blackburn’s Question 4a. VA also briefed House Veterans Affairs Committee staff on September 8, 2022 on the VIEWS system and how it protects private and sensitive information.

- d. **How do you distinguish between the “authority” you have over the VIEWS system and the “operation[al]” management that the Executive Secretariat performs?**

As Chief of Staff, I am ultimately responsible for the VIEWS system. The Executive Secretariat uses the VIEWS system on a daily basis and is the VA unit responsible for overseeing the business requirements of the VIEWS system

- e. **Why were the employees who approached your Deputy Chief of Staff to express serious concerns with the VIEWS system not informed of the action you took to meet with the Executive Secretariat and the Executive Secretariat's work to implement additional protective measures?**

Shortly after the allegations regarding the VIEWS system were brought to my attention, on August 2, 2022, VA received a letter from the Office of Special Counsel referring these allegations for investigation. As discussed above, following the assignment of the investigation of the allegations to OIT, I deferred to that investigation and expected the OIT investigators to be in regular contact with those employees who had raised the allegations.

- f. **You cited the investigation ordered by OSC as a reason you did not request an audit, but can you explain why that would have prevented you from asking for that audit, since the VA was in charge of the investigation and presumably could have set its parameters?**

Because OIT was investigating the matter, I did not believe an additional audit was necessary. I commit to carefully review the OIT report and take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the confidentiality of sensitive information in VIEWS is properly protected.

6. **In your response to committee questions about sensitive information unsecured in VIEWS, you said that VIEWS, "does not handle medical records, claims, benefits, or financial actions." You also noted that, "the VIEWS system has controls in place to protect personal and sensitive data, with only specific designated team members permitted to access sensitive cases... All employees using VIEWS must complete mandatory training, and system access is logged. Audits also are done to make sure information on the VIEWS system is accessed appropriately."**

- a. **How are these logs used, and how are these audits conducted? What parameters are applied? How much of the VIEWS system is audited, and at what frequency?**

Logs are generated by DTC using their Splunk data logging tool. Major user activities are logged, such as login date and time, etc. Information is displayed on self-service dashboards for managers to review and monitor. The VIEWS system is audited in connection with receiving an Authority To Operate (ATO) at a Minor Application Moderate with Privacy based on Security and NIST standards. The VIEWS system also is regularly checked by VA's Privacy Officer and Information System Security Officer to ensure the safety of sensitive information. These officials have issued annual Privacy Threshold Analysis (PTA) and Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) reports affirming that VIEWS is appropriate for sensitive information, including most recently in Fall 2022. VIEWS has been FedRAMP certified with an authorization date of November 2, 2020.

b. Has the VA audited the specific whistleblower and PII information brought to your office's attention in July 2022 for potential misuse?

Not that I am aware of. However, I do not know what audits or other reviews have been performed by the OIT as part of its ongoing investigation.

c. Have the VA audits you referenced detected any instances of unauthorized access by VA employees or instances of misuse of that data? If so, describe the number of instances and nature of those findings.

Not that I am aware of. However, I do not know what audits or other reviews have been performed by the OIT as part of its investigation and, if so, the findings of such audits. The system is regularly checked by VA's Privacy Officer and Information System Security Officer to ensure the safety of sensitive information. These officials have issued annual Privacy Threshold Analysis (PTA) and Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) reports affirming that VIEWS is appropriate for sensitive information, including most recently in Fall 2022. VIEWS has been FedRAMP certified with an authorization date of November 2, 2020.

d. When a case is marked sensitive, are unauthorized viewers able to view anything about that case, even if they aren't able to view the attachment or body of the text? For example, are they able to view the title of the email or attachments?

No. A user who is not a member of the specific Case Team will be able to see only the Case ID number and a banner message indicating that they should contact the Case Owner for more information.

e. How often do VA employees undergo mandatory training for the VIEWS system? Does such training include an assessment of understanding? Is there a mechanism within the VIEWS system to track compliance?

Before being provided log-in access to the VIEWS system, an employee must complete 3 training courses by accessing the Information Technology Workforce Development (ITWD) training platform, including "Introduction to VIEWS Case and Correspondence Management (CCM)" and "Managing Cases in VIEWS Case and Correspondence Management." The training provides explanations regarding case sensitivity and explanations of PII/PHI. Several of these Web-based training courses include "knowledge checks," which are intended to help the student assess their understanding of the content.

In addition, all employees are required to take annual privacy training which focuses on protecting PII and PHI information. This training provides information security and privacy training important for all VA staff who use information systems or handle sensitive information. It identifies the types of information that must be carefully handled to protect privacy; describes the required information security practices, legal requirements, and consequences and penalties for non-compliance; and explains how to report incidents. It also includes an assessment of the individual's understanding of what was learned during the course of the training.

Training completion reports are available from ITWD. Employees who request access to VIEWS CCM for the first time are required to submit evidence of having completed the required training courses before their user accounts are provisioned.

f. Isn't it true that sensitive medical, claims, benefits or other information would be in the VIEWS system if it was part of VA correspondence tracked in the system?

Yes.

7. In your response to committee questions, you noted that in June-July 2023 the Department intends to deactivate VIEWS user accounts after 45 days of inactivity rather than 90, and require new users to meet three role-based criteria and receive first-line supervisor approval. How many current VIEWS system users do you anticipate there will be following the implementation of these measures?

I am told that we will not know the extent of the reduction of users until approximately 30-60 days after the change takes effect.

8. In your response to committee questions, you note that VA is "exploring the feasibility of adding two-step authentication when logging into VIEWS." How is VA exploring such feasibility and when do you expect a decision to be made about the feasibility of adding two-step authentication in order to access the VIEWS system?

VIEWS is accessible only on VA-owned and managed laptop and desktop PCs. Employees accessing VA-owned desktop computers are required to have in their possession a validated, VA-owned Personal Identification Card (PIV) and Personal Identity Number (PIN); without such physical credentials and information the desktop computer cannot be used. Consequently, VIEWS, via the Microsoft Edge Web browser, already inherits two-factor SSL security authorization from the computer.

However, to further enhance privacy and provide another layer of security, OIT has requested the DTC (Digital Transformation Center, the office responsible for running the Salesforce platform) to conduct a feasibility study for adding application-level two-factor authentication. OIT has requested that VIEWS CCM users be presented with a security warning banner message upon logging into the system, which they must acknowledge with a button click, and then they will be prompted to select their PIV credential and enter their PIN. All access attempts, whether failed or successful, will be logged with typical date and timestamps, computer name, and other information to be determined based on recommendations and security best practices. VA expects a preliminary response from DTC within one month. If this feasibility study confirms that the capability can be implemented on the Salesforce platform, then a full timeline of events will be established.

9. Is it your understanding or belief that your ability to act in response to employee concerns about the VIEWS system is in any way hampered by the OSC or the ongoing OIT investigation? If so, what is that understanding or belief based on?

I do not believe the OIT investigation prevents us from taking steps to address issues relating to the VIEWS system's protection of sensitive information. For that reason, over the past year VA has undertaken a number of measures to further strengthen protections of private and sensitive information in VIEWS, including security enhancements, limiting access, and improved training. See Response to Senator Blackburn's Question 4a. I commit to carefully review the OIT report and take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the confidentiality of sensitive information on VIEWS is properly protected.

10. What accountability do you believe that you bear for the ongoing concerns regarding the VIEWS system?

I am responsible and accountable for the VIEWS system. As I previously noted, only a tiny fraction—less than half of one percent (0.05%)—of department employees have access to VIEWS. VIEWS runs on a secure platform called Salesforce Government Cloud Plus, which has been approved by more than 40 federal agencies. The system is regularly checked by VA's Privacy Officer and Information System Security Officer to ensure the safety of sensitive information. These officials have issued annual Privacy Threshold Analysis (PTA) and Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) reports affirming that VIEWS is appropriate for sensitive information, including most recently in Fall 2022. VIEWS has been FedRAMP certified with an authorization date of November 2, 2020.

The VIEWS system has controls in place to protect personal and sensitive data, with only specific designated team members permitted to access sensitive cases. Any other user lacking permission who attempts to access a sensitive case cannot see the case information or attachments relating to the sensitive matter. All employees using VIEWS must complete mandatory training, and system access is logged.

Since allegations regarding VIEWS were raised last summer, VA has undertaken a number of measures to further strengthen protections of private and sensitive information in VIEWS, including security enhancements, limiting access, and improved training. VA also has designated OIT to conduct an investigation of the allegations regarding VIEWS. OIT's report on the results of its investigation is expected to be submitted to OSC by August 1, 2023. I commit to carefully review the OIT report and take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the confidentiality of sensitive information on VIEWS is properly protected.

In regard to my question about employee accountability actions taken by the Department, thank you for the data chart displaying total adverse actions in each year from fiscal year 2016 to fiscal year 2022. I remain interested in reviewing whether or not

use of the authority had the intended impact of expediting removal processes from those occurring before passage of the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017.

- 11. Please provide the average time, from beginning of disciplinary process to completion, that it took for VA to administer these adverse actions in each year from fiscal year 2016 to fiscal year 2022.**

I am told that VA established a Department-wide human resources (HR) information technology system to collect, monitor and report data related to employee relations matters in July 2020. Prior to this date, there was no enterprise-wide system of records for employee relations data and reporting. As a result, we cannot determine whether or not use of the authority had any impact on the time of the removal processes during fiscal year 2016 to fiscal year 2022. Based on information currently in the system for fiscal years 2020, 2021, and 2022, we can report that the average time to process an adverse action starting with receipt of an evidence file and ending with issuance of a decision was between 56 and 69 days during that time period.

In regard to my question about the timeliness of VA's responsiveness to Congressional inquiries, I appreciate that, if confirmed, you would hold the Deputies of each of the administrations and departments accountable for timely testimony, requests for information, letters and general inquiries from Congress.

- 12. What exact steps would you take if confirmed as Deputy Secretary to improve the timeliness of VA's communications with Congressional stakeholders and how will you ensure accountability for maintaining timeliness and transparency?**

If confirmed as Deputy Secretary, it will be a priority of mine to hold VA accountable to maintaining timely and transparent communications with this Committee and our Congressional stakeholders. The first step along this path of continuous improvement is to ensure collaboration between members, staff, and VA leadership. Lessons learned as a congressional staffer about the importance of a respectful and responsive relationship with Committees would inform my approach to proactively sharing information. I have observed that a strong and productive exchange between VA and Congress is reflective of the amount of ongoing collaboration and continuous outreach to strengthen the relationship. My goal will be to keep in regular touch with this Committee and members of Congress so that they can continue their work to help Veterans, and I will continuously monitor VA's performance and identify any trouble spots.

Second, I would convene a regularly occurring meeting with the Deputies across VA's administrations where we can discuss the status of existing requests from Congress and address any causes for delay. This will not only give us greater insight into where responses are getting stuck but will also provide an opportunity to increase cross-talk and communication. Without the support of the program and staff offices, VA cannot provide

Congress with accurate, reliable information and data on VA's programs, updates on execution of its priorities or technical assistance on legislation

Third, I would work across administrations to apply human-centered design approaches to improve and streamline the processes. For example, not all inquiries require the same amount of effort. There are yes-and-no queries that should have quick turnaround, whereas pulling significant data and information could take longer. While one-size-fits-all benchmarks might not make sense, it does make sense that Congress gets useful information it needs to do its job, within a reasonable timeframe.

Lastly, I will work with the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs and the Office of Enterprise Integration to continuously monitor VA's performance and identify any trouble spots.

13. Do you acknowledge the role of Congress in the oversight of federal agencies as essential to the legislative powers vested in Congress by Article I of the Constitution?

Yes. It is my understanding that Supreme Court has stated: "the power of inquiry—with process to enforce it—is an essential and appropriate auxiliary to the legislative function" *McGrain v. Daugherty*, 273 U.S. 135, 174 (1927). As a former congressional staffer, I fully appreciate the importance of Congress's oversight role which helps make VA better in fulfilling its mission of providing world-class care and benefits to Veterans.

14. Do you recognize that Congress is exempt from regulations, laws, and policies that would otherwise prevent the disclosure of private information about veteran patients?

It is my understanding that while Congress has exempted itself from some regulations, laws, and policies that would otherwise prevent the disclosure of private information about Veteran patients, Congress does not enjoy a blanket exemption and any exemptions may not be absolute and may depend on the particular facts and circumstances. Nevertheless, I will seek to provide information in response to Congressional requests to the fullest extent consistent with executive branch policies and practices and the law.

15. What role, if any, do you think the Department should have in determining the validity of Congressional oversight requests?

Upon receipt of a properly authorized oversight request, the Executive Branch's longstanding policy has been to engage in the accommodation process by supplying the requested information to the fullest extent consistent with the constitutional and statutory obligations of the Executive Branch.

16. Please provide the number of Veterans Care Agreements that have been entered into to-date pertaining to the interim final rule on reproductive health.

I have not been involved in developing or implementing the Reproductive Health Services IFR (87 Federal Register 55287). I will refer your question to the Veterans Health Administration to coordinate with the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs in providing a response.

17. Please provide, in full, all the training materials, recordings, documents, and modules provided to VA employees by the Department pertaining to the interim final rule on reproductive health.

I have not been involved in developing or implementing the Reproductive Health Services IFR (87 Federal Register 55287). I will refer your question to the Veterans Health Administration to coordinate with the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs in providing a response.

18. Please provide, in full, a complete list of the relevant medical diagnoses that have resulted in referrals for abortion under the health exception included in the interim final rule on reproductive health.

I have not been involved in developing or implementing the Reproductive Health Services IFR (87 Federal Register 55287). I will refer your question to the Veterans Health Administration to coordinate with the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs in providing a response.

UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ROOM 412 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510
Telephone: (202) 224-9126

QUESTIONNAIRE
FOR PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEES

The Rules of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs require that a Presidential nominee whose nomination is referred to the Committee submit, on a form approved by the Committee, a sworn statement concerning his or her background and financial interests, including the financial interests of the nominee's spouse and children living in the nominee's household. The Committee form is in two parts:

- (A) Information concerning the employment, education, and relevant background of the nominee, which is made public; and
- (B) Information concerning the financial and other background of the nominee, which is made public only when the Committee determines that such information bears directly on the nominee's qualifications to hold the position to which the individual is nominated.

Committee action on a nomination, including hearings or a meeting to consider a motion to recommend confirmation, shall not be initiated until at least five days after the nominee submits this form unless the Chairman, with the concurrence of the Ranking Minority Member, waives the waiting period. In order to assist the Committee in its consideration of nominations, the Committee requests that each nominee complete the attached Questionnaire for Presidential Nominees. The notarized original and any supplemental information should be delivered to:

Committee on Veterans' Affairs
United States Senate
Room 412, Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Attention: Chief Clerk

PART I: ALL OF THE INFORMATION IN THIS PART WILL BE MADE PUBLIC

1. Basic Biographical Information

Please provide the following information.

<i>Position to Which You Have Been Nominated</i>	
<u>Name of Position</u>	<u>Date of Nomination</u>
Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	April 25, 2023

<i>Current Legal Name</i>			
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>
Tanya	Juliana	Bradsher	

<i>Addresses</i>					
<u>Residential Address</u> (do not include street address)			<u>Office Address</u> (include street address)		
			Street: 810 Vermont Avenue, NW		
<u>City:</u> Lorton	<u>State:</u> Virginia	<u>Zip:</u> 22079	<u>City:</u> Washington	<u>State:</u> DC	<u>Zip:</u> 20240

<i>Other Names Used</i>							
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>	<u>Check if Maiden Name</u>	<u>Name Used From</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)	<u>Name Used To</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)	
Tanya	Juliana	Keene		x	10/1969 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	1/1992 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	
Tanya	Juliana	Holmes			1/1992 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	1/1994 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	
Tanya	Juliana	Keene		x	1/1994 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	5/1998 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	

<i>Birth Year and Place</i>	
Year of Birth (Do not include month and day)	Place of Birth
1969	Arlington, Virginia

<i>Marital Status</i>					
Check All That Describe Your Current Situation:					
Never Married	Married	Separated	Annulled	Divorced	Widowed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Spouse's Name</i> (current spouse only)			
Spouse's First Name	Spouse's Middle Name	Spouse's Last Name	Spouse's Suffix
John	Matthew	Bradsher	

<i>Spouse's Other Names Used</i> (current spouse only)						
First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	Suffix	Check if Maiden Name	Name Used From (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)	Name Used To (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)
N/A					Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>
					Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Children's Names (if over 18)</i>			
First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	Suffix
Charlotte	Louise	Bradsher	
Catherine	Emma	Bradsher	

2. Education

List all post-secondary schools attended.

<u>Name of School</u>	<u>Type of School</u> (vocational/technical/trade school, college/university/military college, correspondence/distance/extension/online school)	<u>Date Began School</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Ended School</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still in school)	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Date Awarded</u>
UNC at Chapel Hill	University	8/1987 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	12/1991 Est <input type="checkbox"/> Present <input type="checkbox"/>	BA	Dec 31, 1991
George Washington	University	1/2017 Est <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1/2019 Est <input type="checkbox"/> Present <input type="checkbox"/>	MA	Jan 10, 2019

3. Employment

(A) List all of your employment activities, including unemployment and self-employment. If the employment activity was military duty, list separate employment activity periods to show each change of military duty station. Do not list employment before your 18th birthday unless to provide a minimum of two years of employment history.

<u>Type of Employment</u> (Active Military Duty Station, National Guard/Reserve, USPHS Commissioned Corps, Other federal employment, State Government (Non-federal Employment), Self-employment, Unemployment, Federal Contractor, Non-Government Employment (excluding self-employment), Other)	<u>Name of Your Employer/Assigned Duty Station</u>	<u>Most Recent Position Title/Rank</u>	<u>Location</u> (City and State only)	<u>Date Employment Began</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Employment Ended</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still employed)
Federal Employment	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	Chief of Staff	Washington, DC	Mar 2021 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Est <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present
Federal Employment	National Security Council	Special Assistant to the President for Strategic Engagement	Washington, DC	Jan 2021 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>	Mar 2021 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>
Non-federal Employment	Joe Biden Transition Team	Personnel for National Security Lead	Washington, DC	Aug 2020 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>	Jan 2021 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>
Federal Employment	U.S. Representatives, VA (8) Representative Don Beyer	Chief of Staff	Washington, DC	May 2019 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>	Aug 2020 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>
Non-Federal Employment	American Psychiatric Association	Chief of Communications	Washington, DC and Arlington, VA	Sept 2016 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>	May 2019 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>
Federal Employment	Defense Health Administration	Chief of Plans for Public Affairs	Fairfax, VA	Aug 2015 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>	Sep 2016 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>
Federal Employment	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs	Washington, DC	Apr 2014 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>	Aug 2015 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>
Federal Employment	White House, Office of Public Engagement	Assistant Director for Veterans, Wounded Warriors and Military Family Outreach	Washington, DC	Jul 2013 ^{Est} (served in this position while on terminal leave from the Army retired in Sep 2013) <input type="checkbox"/>	Apr 2014 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>

Active Duty, United States Army	Detailed to the White House, National Security Council from the Pentagon	Assistant Press Secretary for National Security and Defense	Washington, DC	Jun 2011 ^{Est} □	Jun 2013 ^{Est} □
Active Duty, United States Army	Office of the Secretary of Defense	Press Officer	Pentagon	Sep 2009 ^{Est} □	Jun 2011 ^{Est} □
Active Duty, United States Army	2 nd Brigade Combat Team, 4 th Infantry Division	Brigade Public Affairs Officer	Iraq	Sep 2008 ^{Est} □	Sep 2009 ^{Est} □
Active Duty, United States Army	2 nd Brigade Combat Team, 4 th Infantry Division	Brigade Public Affairs Officer	Fort Carson, CO	Jul 2007 ^{Est} □	Sept 2008 ^{Est} □
Active Duty, United States Army	8 th United States Army	Deputy Public Affairs Officer	Seoul, Korea	Mar 2005 ^{Est} □	Jun 2007 ^{Est} □
Active Duty, United States Army	Delta Company, 516 th Battalion, 8 th Personnel Command	Postal Company Commander	Seoul, Korea	Jun 2003 ^{Est} □	Feb 2005 ^{Est} □
Active Duty, United States Army	Joint Staff Public Affairs	Joint Staff Intern	Pentagon	Jul 2001 ^{Est} □	Jun 2003 ^{Est} □
Active Duty, United States Army	Defense Information School	Student	Fort Meade, MD	Jan 2001 ^{Est} □	Jul 2001 ^{Est} □
Active Duty, United States Army	American Forces Information Service (AFIS)	Executive Officer/Chief Military Personnel	Alexandria, VA	Dec 1998 ^{Est} □	Jan 2001 ^{Est} □
Active Duty, United States Army	Adjutant General Advance Course	Student	Fort Jackson, SC	Sep 1998 ^{Est} x	Dec 1998 ^{Est} □
Active Duty, United States Army	Military Entrance Processing Station	Assistant Operations Officer	Fort Bragg, NC with duty in Raleigh, NC	Jun 1996 ^{Est} □	Sep 1998 ^{Est} x
Active Duty, United States Army	American Forces Korean Network	HHD Commander	Seoul, Korea	Jan 1995 ^{Est} □	Jun 1996 ^{Est} □
Active Duty, United States Army	1 st Replacement Company, 516 th Battalion, 8 th Personnel Command	Executive Officer	Seoul, Korea	Jun 1994 ^{Est} □	Jan 1995 ^{Est} □
Active Duty, United States Army	Adjutant General Basic Course	Student	Fort Harrison, IN	Jan 1994 ^{Est} □	Jun 1994 ^{Est} x
Active Duty, United States Army	Officer Candidate School	Student	Fort Benning, GA	May 1993 ^{Est} □	Jan 1994 ^{Est} □

Active Duty, United States Army	Basic Training	Trainee	Fort Jackson, SC	Mar 1993 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>	Apr 1993 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>
Non Federal Employment	Goodwin House West	Administrative Assistant	Alexandria, VA	Jun 1992 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>	Mar 1993 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>
Non Federal Employment	MCI, Inc	Voice Mail Operator	Arlington, VA	Sept 1991 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>	Jun 1992 ^{Est} <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Non-Appropriated Funds	Fort Myer, Childcare Center	Summer Camp Director/Counselor	Fort Myer, VA	May 1989 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>	Sept 1991 ^{Est} <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Non-Appropriated Funds	Fort Myer, Post Exchange	Part time Summer and Holiday Cashier	Fort Myer, VA	Oct 1985 ^{Est} <input type="checkbox"/>	Aug 1990 ^{Est} <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

(B) List any advisory, consultative, honorary or other part-time service or positions with federal, state, or local governments, not listed elsewhere.

Name of Government Entity	Name of Position	Date Service Began (month/year) (check box if estimate)		Date Service Ended (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still serving)	
		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Present <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Present <input type="checkbox"/>
		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Present <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Present <input type="checkbox"/>
		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Present <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Present <input type="checkbox"/>
		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Present <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Present <input type="checkbox"/>

4. Honors and Awards

List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, civilian service citations, military medals, academic or professional honors, honorary society memberships and any other special recognition for outstanding service or achievement.

- DHS Distinguished Service Medal - 2015
- Legion of Merit - 2013
- Bronze Star - 2009
- Meritorious Service Medal – 1996, 2007
- Joint Service Commendation Medal – 1998, 2001, 2003
- Army Commendation Medal – 2003
- Joint Service Achievement Medal – 1996, 1999, 2002
- Army Achievement Medal – 1995
- Presidential Badge – 2013

Joint Staff Badge - 2002
 OSD Badge - 1999

5. Memberships

List all memberships that you have held in professional, social, business, fraternal, scholarly, civic, or charitable organizations in the last ten years.

Unless relevant to your nomination, you do NOT need to include memberships in charitable organizations available to the public as a result of a tax deductible donation of \$1,000 or less, Parent-Teacher Associations or other organizations connected to schools attended by your children, athletic clubs or teams, automobile support organizations (such as AAA), discounts clubs (such as Groupon or Sam's Club), or affinity memberships/consumer clubs (such as frequent flyer memberships).

<u>Name of Organization</u>	<u>Dates of Your Membership</u> (You may approximate)	<u>Position(s) Held</u>
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.	February 1998 until Present	Local Chapter Secretary

6. Political Activity

(A) Have you ever been a candidate for or been elected or appointed to a political office?

<u>Name of Office</u>	<u>Elected/Appointed/ Candidate Only</u>	<u>Year(s) Election Held or Appointment Made</u>	<u>Term of Service (if applicable)</u>
N/A			

(B) List any offices held in or services rendered to a political party or election committee during the last ten years that you have not listed elsewhere.

<u>Name of Party/Election Committee</u>	<u>Office/Services Rendered</u>	<u>Responsibilities</u>	<u>Dates of Service</u>
N/A			

(C) Itemize all individual political contributions of \$200 or more that you have made in the past five years to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity. Please list each individual contribution and not the total amount contributed to the person or entity during the year.

<u>Name of Recipient</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Year of Contribution</u>
Shuwaski Young For Congress	\$500.00	7/14/2021
Biden for President	\$500.00	7/30/2020
Biden Victory Fund	\$500.00	7/30/2020
Biden for President	\$250.00	4/30/2020
Biden for President	\$1000.00	2/29/2020
Biden for President	\$1000.00	11/05/2019
Serve America Victory Fund	\$1000.00	9/16/2018

7. Publications

List the titles, publishers and dates of books, articles, reports or other published materials that you have written, including articles published on the Internet.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Publisher</u>	<u>Date(s) of Publication</u>
Honoring the Legacy of Immigrants Serving in the Armed Forces - Blog Post	The White House, President Barack Obama	November 11, 2013
National POW/MIA Recognition Day: We Will Never Forget	The White House, President Barack Obama	September 20, 2013

8. Public Statements

(A) List any testimony, official statements or other communications relating to matters of public policy that you have issued or provided or that others presented on your behalf to public bodies or officials.

July 2021, WWP, VA, and Lawmakers Discuss Addressing Needs of Post-9/11 Women Warriors

[WWP, VA, and Lawmakers Discuss Addressing Needs of Post-9/11 Women Warriors - Project Advocacy News | WWP \(woundedwarriorproject.org\)](#)

1/17/2023 VA supports women Veteran entrepreneurs in how to obtain government contracts

[VA supports women Veteran entrepreneurs in how to obtain government contracts | TexVet](#)

Village for VETS Blog Post - Tanya Bradsher Helps Build a Village for Vets at the West LA VA

[Tanya Bradsher Helps Build a Village for Vets at the West LA VA — Village for Vets](#)

11/17/2021 POLITICO - Afghanistan Withdrawal

<https://www.politico.com/news/2021/11/17/afghanistan-withdrawal-state-department-522705>

7/26/2021 Million Veteran Program

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=tanya+bradsher&view=detail&mid=A0CFCC1D9D95047F7D34A0CFCC1D9D95047F7D34&FORM=VIRE>

7/29/2022 Women Burial Benefits

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=pNQEg_GwyS0

7/29/2022 Veteran Burial Benefits

<https://m.facebook.com/NationalCemeteries/videos/nca-funeral-and-memorial-benefits-are-available-to-all-eligible-veterans-and-fam/3192529074395616/>

3/11/2015 Time - Obama Cabinet: We Don't Use Only Personal Email

<https://time.com/3735808/hillary-clinton-emails-other-cabinet-officials/>

2/23/2015 - CNN Johnson warns Mall of the America Patrons

<https://www.cnn.com/2015/02/22/politics/jeh-johnson-mall-of-america/index.html>

7/26/2019 - Washington Post - We are African Americans, We are patriots and We refuse to sit Idly by

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-are-african-americans-we-are-patriots-and-we-refuse-to-sit-idly-by/2019/07/26/c02ade6c-af16-11e9-8e77-03b30bc29f64_story.html

1/24/2011 Raw News - More Evidence of US War Crimes

<http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/2011/01/24/more-evidence-of-us-war-crimes.html>

5/2/2011 New York Time - Tugging at Threads to Unspool Stories of Torture

<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/03/health/03torture.html>

Bradsher, Tanya J – AKA Sorority, Inc. "Open Doors"

[Bradsher, Tanya J \(aka1908.com\)](#)

12/18/2011 - Some mixed emotions for Iraq vets in White House

[Some mixed emotions for Iraq vets in White House \(lubbockonline.com\)](#)

9/14/2010 Pentagon Relaxes Reporter Guidelines at Guantanamo Bay

[Pentagon relaxes reporter guidelines at Guantanamo Bay - The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press \(rcfp.org\)](#)

5/7/2010 Press Freedom and Guantanamo

[Press Freedom and Guantánamo | The New Yorker](#)

6/1/2011 New Charges Filed in 9/11 Conspiracy

[New charges filed in 9/11 conspiracy \(dispatch.com\)](#)

(B) List any speeches or talks delivered by you, including commencement speeches, remarks, lectures, panel discussions, conferences, political speeches, and question-and-answer sessions. Include the dates and places where such speeches or talks were given.

2020 10 12 Bradsher GW University Mastering the Room Podcast as a GW Alumnus

2021 03 29 Bradsher Blog Women's History Month

2022 01 20 Bradsher Women Vets Small Business Owners Forum

2022 02 10 Bradsher Black History Month Observance

2022 02 17 Bradsher Black History Month Program

2022 03 14 Bradsher COVID MEMORIAL

2022 04 05 Bradsher VBA Leadership Symposium

2022 04 06 Bradsher VET Rehab FACA Remarks

2022 04 12 Bradsher Senior Leaders Conference Remarks

2022 04 28 Bradsher Script for Retirement Ceremony for Gina Farrissee

2022 05 06 Bradsher Presidential Rank Awards Remarks

2022 05 08 Bradsher Carry the Load Remarks

2022 05 09 Bradsher FACA Women Veterans Remarks

2022 05 09 Bradsher Swearing-In Ceremony Remarks

2022 05 16 Bradsher White Oak Collaborative Remarks

2022 05 18 Bradsher WIMSA Wreath Laying Remarks
2022 05 20 Bradsher Fort Harrison VAMC 100th Anniversary Ceremony Remarks
2022 05 25 Bradsher National Nurses Leadership Council Remarks
2022 06 28 Bradsher VA Veteran Experience Office CX Roundtable Remarks
2022 07 23 Bradsher National Association of Black Military Women Remarks
2022 08 01 Bradsher DAS Swearing in for Adam Farina
2022 0803 Bradsher National Vets Sports Clinic Script
2022 08 15 Bradsher SES Swearing in Script
2022 08 29 Bradsher SES Swearing in Script
2022 09 13 Bradsher Wounded Warrior Women Veterans Speech
2022 09 26 Bradsher SES Swearing in Script
2022 10 27 Bradsher CSEMO Remarks
2022 11 07 Bradsher SES Swearing in Script
2022 12 05 Bradsher SES Swearing in Script
2022 12 19 Bradsher Captain Moreno VAMC Renaming Remarks
2022 12 15 Bradsher Week of Action Remarks
2023 01 03 Bradsher SES Swearing in Script
2023 01 17 Bradsher SES Swearing in Script
2023 01 30 Bradsher SES Swearing in Script
2023 02 01 Bradsher Forum on Women Veteran Small Business Owners Remarks
2023 02 15 Bradsher VBA PACT Act Hiring Fair Remarks
2023 02 15 Bradsher Los Angeles VCOEB Talking Points
2023 02 22 Bradsher VBA Black History Month Remarks
2023 02 27 Bradsher Black Veterans Community Support Forum
2023 02 28 Bradsher GLA Ribbon Cutting Ceremony
2023 03 15 Bradsher OGC Women's History Month

- 2023 03 16 Bradsher Birmingham VAMC 70th Anniversary
- 2023 03 27 Bradsher SES Swearing-In
- 2023 04 18 Bradsher Holocaust Remembrance Day
- 2023 04 20 Bradsher Special Medical Advisory Group
- 2023 04 24 Bradsher SES Swearing-In

(C) List all interviews you have given to newspapers, magazines or other publications, and radio or television stations (including the dates of such interviews).

9. Agreements or Arrangements

X See OGE Form 278. (If, for your nomination, you have completed an OGE Form 278 Executive Branch Personnel Public Financial Disclosure Report, you may check the box here to complete this section and then proceed to the next section.)

As of the date of filing your OGE Form 278, report your agreements or arrangements for: (1) continuing participation in an employee benefit plan (e.g. pension, 401k, deferred compensation); (2) continuation of payment by a former employer (including severance payments); (3) leaves of absence; and (4) future employment.

Provide information regarding any agreements or arrangements you have concerning (1) future employment; (2) a leave of absence during your period of Government service; (3) continuation of payments by a former employer other than the United States Government; and (4) continuing participation in an employee welfare or benefit plan maintained by a former employer other than United States Government retirement benefits.

<u>Status and Terms of Any Agreement or Arrangement</u>	<u>Parties</u>	<u>Date</u> (month/year)

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10. Lobbying

Have you ever registered as a lobbyist? No

If so, please indicate the state, federal, or local bodies with which you have registered (e.g., House, Senate, California Secretary of State).

11. Testifying Before the Congress

(A) Do you agree to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress upon the request of such Committee? Yes

(B) Do you agree to provide such information as is requested by such a committee? Yes

Statement for the Record

**Senator Sinema
Statement for the Record
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Hearing to Consider a Pending Nomination
05/31/23**

Senator Sinema Statement for the Record

Thank you, Chairman Tester, for holding this hearing and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Today's hearing underscores the paramount importance of vetting and confirming qualified nominees to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). In Arizona, veterans hold a special place in our hearts and communities. With almost half-a-million veterans calling Arizona home, they make up almost 10 percent of the State's population. They bring invaluable skills, experiences, and a deep sense of patriotism to our communities. It is our duty to recognize their sacrifices and ensure that the VA is led by capable individuals who possess the necessary expertise and dedication to provide them with the highest standard of care and support.

By carefully scrutinizing and confirming qualified nominees, we uphold our commitment to these honorable men and women. A robust and thorough confirmation process is essential to guarantee that the VA is led by professionals who possess the expertise, compassion, and commitment required to fulfill the duty of caring for our veterans.