

STATEMENT OF PATRICIA L. ROSS
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CONGRESSIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Thank you, Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Moran and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify today. I am deeply honored to be nominated by President Biden to serve as the Assistant Secretary of the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs at VA.

I want to thank Speaker Pelosi for introducing me today. She has shattered the marble ceiling with her leadership in Congress, but her dedication to honoring Veterans is inspiring to me. It was the honor of a lifetime to join her at the commemorative events for the 75th anniversaries of the D-Day landings in Normandy and then Battle of the Bulge.

My time as a Congressional staff member, both in the Speaker's personal office, as well as on her leadership team, have provided me the opportunity to engage directly on policy issues impacting Veterans and their families. Working on these important issues has allowed me to earn the trust, respect, and partnership of staff and Members on both sides of the aisle and Capitol, and among the Veteran Service Organizations. I am proud of the bills that I have been a part of over the last decade. They changed the lives of Veterans.

These pieces of legislation demonstrate the nature of the Veterans Committees—prioritizing service to those who have served, irrespective of partisanship, and always getting the job done for Veterans.

If confirmed, I have three goals— build trust and strengthen the partnership between VA and Congress; fulfill the legislative priorities of the President and Secretary; and honor the mission of VA.

I join Secretary McDonough's unequivocal commitment made to Congress: I will continue to fight relentlessly for all Veterans. I will work my hardest to continue honoring the bipartisan tradition of fulfilling our sacred obligation: to leave no Veteran behind when they return home.

I have a unique perspective on the relationship between VA and Congress. I have myself been in the position of wanting better, more timely information from the Department, so I recognize and understand the frustrations felt by this Committee.

I also know that VA cannot succeed without Congress. If confirmed, I will work within the Department to ensure the Committee and the Congress are seen as partners with the same objectives. I believe my colleagues would tell you that I have a reputation as an engaged listener and learner, a collaborator and consensus builder, and a reasonable, responsive, honest and transparent partner.

I come to the table with an understanding of the challenges VA is facing, from the perspective of the constituents who contact your office. I know what you need to respond to their concerns, and if confirmed, I would be their advocate in the Department.

My work for Veterans and the family behind the uniform is personal. I am the proud partner, granddaughter, niece and daughter of Veterans. My grandfather, William Kendrick—the inspiring force behind my career choice and decision to move to Washington, D.C.— took a leave of absence from Duke University in 1942 to enlist in the Navy and serve during the Second World War. My uncle, Dr. Peter J. Ross, is an Army retired Colonel after 37 years of service. My partner, Tim Bertocci – who joins me today, is a West Point graduate and served as an Army Armor Officer, including deployments to Iraq, Kuwait and the Republic of Korea.

Tim, like so many others he served with, rely on VA. They are the reason for my call to serve and ensure VA is well-positioned for all Veterans.

I would also like to thank my mom, Nancy, and sisters, Michelle and Barbara, who join me today.

I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you.