

**Testimony of Ms. Leigh Bradley  
Nominee to be General Counsel  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
December 4, 2014**

Chairman Sanders, Ranking Member Burr, Distinguished Members of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am humbled and honored to have been nominated by President Obama to be VA General Counsel, and grateful to Secretary McDonald, and Deputy Secretary Gibson for their confidence in me.

Mr. Chairman, from the start of my legal career in 1987 as an active-duty Air Force Judge Advocate to my present position as Director of the Department of Defense (DoD) Standards of Conduct Office, I have been guided by a deep and personal commitment to our nation's Armed Forces and its Veterans. I come from a long, proud line of military Veterans. My father is a Vietnam Veteran who served as a career officer in the Army Corps of Engineers. Both of my grandfathers served in the U.S. Army--one in World War I and the other in World War II. My husband served for 20 years as an Air Force Judge Advocate, and my brother-in-law currently serves as an Air Force B-1 Weapons Systems Operator.

Finally, and I say this with great joy and pride, my daughter has decided to follow in the family's footsteps. She is a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the Air Force, studying to be a doctor at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences at Walter Reed. I am immensely proud of her decision to continue our family's tradition of service in uniform.

I have spent the majority of my legal career supporting the mission of the Armed Forces and the needs of our nation's Veterans. After five years on active duty, I was selected for a civilian position in the DoD Office of the General Counsel. Later, I served as the Principal Deputy General Counsel of the Navy, the second highest ranking civilian attorney in an office of over 600. In 1998, I was nominated by President Clinton and confirmed by the Senate to be General Counsel of the Department of Veterans Affairs. And in my current position, I advise the senior DoD leadership on ethical compliance and creating and sustaining ethical cultures across the Department.

I also was fortunate to have served in senior positions in the private sector for seven years--first, as a partner at Holland and Knight LLP, a national law firm, and then as Chief of Staff and later Chief Risk Officer of the American Red Cross. These positions instilled the discipline and accountability that follow from regularly meeting a bottom line and delivering concrete results that meet the expectations of a broad range of parties, including paying clients, charitable donors, and a board of directors.

My family background and legal career have inspired in me an abiding respect and appreciation for the contributions of the men and women currently serving in uniform and every generation of our Veterans, who have, throughout the history of our Nation, selflessly demonstrated their willingness to defend our country's interests with their lives. I absolutely believe that it is VA's sacred duty to care for these patriots.

Of late, however, VA has not fully met its responsibilities and obligations to Veterans, and we must make restoring their trust our top priority. To quote Secretary McDonald, "the seriousness of this moment demands urgent action." I am deeply inspired by the dedication, vision, and leadership of Secretary McDonald and Deputy Secretary Gibson. While this is a challenging time at VA, it is also an exciting and transformative time in which the leaders of the Department, in cooperation with Congress, Veterans Service Organizations, and other Veterans' stakeholders can collaborate to reform and improve services to Veterans.

Yes, there is hard work to be done. But for me, there can be no higher calling than to be part of this historic moment which will have lasting, positive impacts on the care and benefits we deliver to Veterans and the way VA operates going forward.

Accordingly, if confirmed, I will work closely with the VA leadership team to strengthen the Department's ability to serve our nation's Veterans and restore trust with them, with Congress, and with the American public. I will do all in my power to provide thoughtful, expert advice and counsel on all legal matters including those associated with the implementation of both the Veterans Choice Act and *MyVA* (the Secretary's ground-breaking initiative to bring a singular focus on customer service to Veterans), improving access to medical care, better delivery of other VA services and benefits, protecting the rights of whistleblowers, and helping to ensure that the processes to hold employees accountable for wrong-doing are expedient, fair, and defensible. I will do this by exemplifying VA's core ethical values of integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect, and excellence.

Finally, I would not be here today without the unwavering encouragement of my family starting with my Mom and Dad, Jackie and Phil Bradley, and the constant support and love of my husband of over 30 years, Doug Wade, and our daughter LT Jacqueline Wade, both of whom accompany me today.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, for your consideration of my nomination. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have, and I would ask that this statement be entered into the record.