

**OPENING STATEMENT**  
**Nomination Hearing of Karen L. Brazell to be**  
**Under Secretary for Benefits of the Department of Veterans Affairs**

Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Blumenthal, and Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am honored to be considered for the role of Under Secretary for Benefits at the Department of Veterans Affairs. I want to thank President Trump for this nomination and Secretary Collins for his faith and confidence in me to lead one of the most consequential missions within the Department. I am equally grateful to the Members of this Committee for your unwavering commitment to Veterans and for considering my nomination.

This would be my second tour of duty, both at VA and with President Trump's administration, and I do not take lightly what that means. Leadership requires sacrifice—it requires giving more than those you lead. In today's environment, volunteering for political service brings intense scrutiny, personal attacks, and disclosure of one's private matters. I have accepted those responsibilities because I believe there is no higher calling than serving our nation's Veterans.

My family's story makes this mission profoundly personal. I am a third-generation veteran. Both of my grandfathers served in wartime, one in World War I and the other in World War II. My father, a Vietnam Veteran, served a 12-month deployment, and my husband of 40 years, First Sergeant (Retired) Kent, served in Operation Enduring Freedom. I continued that legacy as an enlisted woman in the United States Army. I know the rigorous preparations for deployment—the readiness checks, the long hours, and the responsibility of ensuring that you and your fellow soldiers are ready for whatever lies ahead.

Later, as a military spouse, I experienced deployment preparation from the other side—holding together a household, steadying children, and standing watch over the family so that Kent could focus on his mission abroad. Those dual perspectives, both in uniform and as a spouse, provided me with a profound understanding of servant leadership.

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Kent is here with me today, along with our two daughters, Jamie and Jacquelin. My 88-year-old mother, a proud U.S. Air Force veteran, and my father-in-law, an almost 89-year-old retired U.S. Air Force veteran, are watching this hearing, along with other family members and friends. Their presence reminds me that military service is not just my story—it is our family’s story, a legacy of service and sacrifice across generations. I used my VA education benefits to advance my career, gaining firsthand insight into how these programs empower Veterans to transition successfully—a lived experience that will always guide my leadership.

Over my 40-year career in the military, government, and industry, I have worked to enhance Veterans' access to the benefits they earned. I proudly served four years on active duty, then spent the next 16 years supporting Kent’s Army career as a military spouse—experiencing the sacrifice, resilience, and strength required not only by those who serve, but also of their families. That perspective gives me a unique understanding of the human impact behind every VA policy.

In government, I have led at the intersection of policy, technology, and Veteran advocacy. As VA’s Chief Acquisition Officer and Acting Assistant Secretary for Enterprise Integration, I managed a \$30 billion portfolio and a workforce of over 12,000 professionals. I expedited the Community Care Network contracts to expand private-sector care and modernized benefits systems to streamline intake, scheduling, and monitoring—always with accountability, transparency, and trusted outcomes for veterans.

In the industry, I built on that experience by modernizing health IT and benefits delivery with technology companies. I deployed automation to accelerate claims intake, implemented real-time dashboards for oversight, and reduced backlogs that had kept Veterans waiting too long for decisions. These innovations minimized errors and delivered more reliable outcomes for Veterans and their families.

In every role, my focus has been to deliver results by listening to Veterans, elevating underserved voices, and empowered teams that never lost sight of the mission: *to put Veterans at the center of every decision, fighting for their access to*

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*earned benefits, and ensure those benefits are delivered with dignity, efficiency, and urgency.*

If confirmed, I will lead with three guiding principles: ***I will follow the law. I will put Veterans first. And I will ensure accountability and fiscal stewardship of taxpayer dollars.***

Thank you again to President Trump and Secretary Collins for entrusting me with this responsibility, and to the Members of this Committee for your trust and consideration. I look forward to your questions.