

Statement of Maria Chapa Lopez
Nominee for
Chair, Board of Veterans' Appeals
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
before the
Committee of Veterans' Affairs
United States Senate
September 23, 2026

Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is a profound honor to be nominated by President Trump to serve as Chair of the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

I also want to thank this Committee for its longstanding commitment to our Nation's Veterans and to strengthening the system that delivers the benefits they have earned through their service and sacrifice.

Service to our country, and to those who have worn the uniform, is deeply personal to me and to my family.

I had the privilege of serving as an officer in the United States Army. My husband is an Army veteran who continues his commitment to public service today as a law enforcement officer. And my niece is a Veteran of the United States Air Force. Like so many American families, service to our Nation is woven into our lives, and we understand both the sacrifices made by those who serve and the promises our country makes to them in return.

I am also the proud daughter of immigrants and a first-generation American. The opportunities this country has provided to me and my family are the embodiment of the American dream. My life and career have been shaped by the values of hard work, service, faith, and gratitude for this Nation and the opportunities it continues to offer me. Public service has always been my way of giving back to the country that has given so much to me and to my family.

Throughout my career, I have tried to honor those values through public service. As a federal prosecutor, and later as the United States Attorney for the Middle District of Florida, I had the privilege of leading one of the largest United States Attorney's Offices in the country. I have also led in the Army, where I served as a

Judge Advocate, advising commanders and helping guide legal decision-making in complex and high-stakes environments.

My experience at both at the Department of Justice and in the United States Army, taught me that successful stewardship of large, mission-driven organizations requires principled leadership, disciplined processes, accountability and, most of all, respect for the people carrying out that mission. For a large share of my professional life, I have managed large teams responsible for legal decisions that profoundly affect people's lives. I also understand that supporting a professional, motivated workforce is essential to ensuring those decisions are timely, consistent, and grounded in the law.

As both a United States Attorney and as an Army JAG officer, I was entrusted to exercise objective judgment based on the law and the facts, without undue influence, and to uphold the integrity of the institutions I served. My commitment has always been to the law, to the facts of each case, and to the people we serve, and that is exactly how I would approach this role as well.

In my view, these same principles are essential to the work of the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

For many Veterans and their families, the Board represents their final opportunity within the Department of Veterans Affairs to receive a full and fair review of their claims. Every appeal represents a Veteran or family seeking a fair answer from the system created to serve them. They deserve decisions that are thoughtful, legally sound, and delivered without unnecessary delay.

In advance of this hearing, I have become familiar with the substantial improvements in VA care and benefits during the first 18 months of this Administration. I know the Secretary, VA leadership and the Board are committed to doing even more. I fully recognize the value and importance of continuing efforts to improve the timeliness of decisions while maintaining the high standards of legal review that Veterans deserve.

If confirmed, I will commit myself to supporting continuous efforts to promote further efficiency, consistency in decision-making, and the responsible stewardship of the Board's resources in ways that best serve the needs of Veterans and their families we are sworn to serve.

As Chair, I would also be committed to ensuring the Board continues to operate as a fair and independent adjudicatory body while working collaboratively with the Department, this Committee, and Veterans service organizations to serve veterans effectively.

If confirmed, my priority will be to support the dedicated Veterans Law Judges and professional staff of the Board in carrying out this critical mission—ensuring fairness, efficiency in the process, consistency in the application of the law, and respect for due process.

Recently our Nation observed Memorial Day and commemorated the anniversary of D-Day, reminding us once again of the extraordinary courage and sacrifice of the men and women who have defended our freedoms across generations. Our Veterans stepped forward when called upon to serve.

If confirmed, it would be the honor of my life to step forward to serve them in return and help ensure that our Nation keeps its promises to those who have worn the uniform.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your questions.