

Mr. James Phillip Terry, nominated to be Chairman of the Board of Veterans' Appeals, U.S.  
Department of Veterans Affairs

STATEMENT OF JAMES P. TERRY  
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE

Hearing in Furtherance of the Determination on Confirmation to the Position of Chairman of the  
Board of Veterans' Appeals, Department  
of Veterans Affairs

July 14, 2005

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Akaka, and  
Members of the Committee?and thank you Senator Allen for those kind words of introduction.

I am joined here today by my wife of more than 35 years,  
Michelle. She has been at my side for nearly all of my 37 years of  
government service. I'm deeply grateful for her support, and she is  
my life. Also with us today is our youngest daughter Kristin, an attorney with Choate, Stewart,  
Hall in Boston. I am also honored to be joined today by our dear friends Ambassador Jay  
Niemczyk and his wife Peg, and colleagues from my service with the Defense, Interior and State  
Departments.

I am deeply honored to appear before you as President Bush's nominee for Chairman of the  
Board of Veterans' Appeals. I can assure you, that if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to ensure  
that the Board provides the fair and timely adjudication of appeals that our Nation's veterans and  
their families deserve.

As a veteran of 27 years of active service in the Marine Corps as an infantry officer and then as  
a judge advocate, my military experience represents the defining period of my life. It was while  
in the Marine Corps that I recognized the tremendous sacrifice made by the superb men and  
women who have committed themselves to the defense of this nation.

My commitment to those who served this country is both deep and personal. My father was a  
Navy pilot during World War II and my father-in-law likewise served with distinction in the  
Navy and was at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. My mother served as a designated Coast  
Watcher for the then-Department of War during the Second World War. During the Vietnam

conflict, while I served as a Platoon Commander with the 1st Battalion, Third Marine Regiment in Vietnam, three of my brothers—Joel, Roy and Thomas—were also serving in uniform, as was my sister Jean.

I have always viewed service to this nation, in whatever form, as an obligation and honor to be shared by all Americans. Following my retirement from the Marine Corps, I served 6 years in the Senior Executive Service with the Department of Interior, and then rejoined General Powell for four years at the Department of State, having served earlier as his Legal Counsel while he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Each assignment was challenging and rewarding. Now I look forward to this opportunity to continue to serve my country and particularly to serve veterans—those to whom we as a nation owe such a great debt.

It is with this background that I totally commit to you that I will work tirelessly to ensure the Veterans Law Judges, staff counsel, and administrative support personnel at the Board of Veterans' Appeals accomplish our mission to provide high quality, fair and timely decisions in all matters before the Board in as efficient and productive a manner as possible.

As the final arbiter on behalf of the Secretary of all appeals in claims for veterans' benefits, the Board has a special responsibility to guarantee that the Department has provided each appellant with full, fair and impartial review of their case. It must ensure that all

due process and full consideration of the law has been provided, including the precedent decisions of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims and other federal courts.

If confirmed, I will work assiduously to see that that the Board meets that responsibility and that we achieve total transparency in the way appeals are processed within the Department. I will work cooperatively with all those involved in the adjudication process—the Veterans Benefits Administration, the Veterans Health Administration, the Office of General Counsel, the veterans service organizations, the Committee and members of Congress—so that we deliver the best and most timely service to America's veterans.

This is indeed a momentous responsibility. But I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that if confirmed, I will uphold this trust on behalf of all our men and women in uniform and on behalf of all those who have served.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Senator Akaka, and Members of the Committee. May I respond to your questions.