

David L. Norquist

Senate Armed Services Committee

Nomination Hearing – Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)

Opening Statement

Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, and members of this Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) and Chief Financial Officer. I am humbled by the confidence that the President and Secretary Mattis have shown in recommending me, and I thank this Committee for its consideration of my nomination.

On a personal note, I would like to recognize my father, Warren Norquist. The lessons my parents taught me are the foundation of who I am.

I would also like to express my appreciation to my wife, Stephanie, for her love, her dedication to our family, and especially her willingness to support me in this nomination process as she is all too familiar with the long hours that would accompany a return to government service.

And finally, my children, Warren, Elise, and Vivian. They are a constant reminder that the decisions we make today determine the America they will live in tomorrow.

I began my career as a Federal civil servant, a GS-9 Program/Budget analyst working for the Department of the Army. Over the last 28 years, I have worked financial management issues at virtually every level at which the Federal Government spends or oversees the expenditure of money, positions ranging from Director of Resource Management at a military field site overseas to the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Each of these positions has had the dual missions of protecting this Nation's security and protecting the taxpayers' money. It is a profound responsibility, but these are things I believe in passionately. It is what I do for a living. It is why I enjoy my work.

Should I be confirmed as Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), my duties would include working within the Administration and with Congress to build robust defense budgets that fully support the Department's mission and the men and women in our Armed Forces. Unfortunately, we would not start from level ground. Years of sequestration have seriously undermined the readiness of our military and delayed its modernization. The FY 2017 Omnibus is a first step and the pending FY 2018 budget will be another. But, that needs to be the beginning, not the end. Significantly more needs to be done, including fully eliminating sequestration-level caps for the defense budget.

It is fitting that the Committee should consider the three of us in one panel. Helping the Secretary make the case for the right funding for Defense requires close cooperation between Comptroller and CAPE. I believe I am safe in speaking for my colleagues when I say that should we be confirmed, we are committed to working as a team to achieve Secretary Mattis' objective of "a larger, more capable, and more lethal joint force, driven by a New National Defense Strategy."

If confirmed, as Chief Financial Officer I would also be responsible for improving the Department's financial management practices. As the topic of the audit has come up in several of my meetings with you, let me address it directly.

It is time to audit the Pentagon. For seven years or more, the Department has engaged in audit readiness, preparing for a full scope audit without starting it. This approach has diminishing returns. President Trump has called for "conducting a full audit of the Pentagon." If confirmed, I would implement the President's vision.

I recognize it will take time for the Department to go from being audited to passing an audit. Everything you have heard about the size and complexity of the Department is true, and this legitimately makes any endeavor, like an audit, harder. But that is not a reason to delay the audit - it is the reason to begin.

In 2006, DHS was in a similar position having never passed a financial statement audit. When I was confirmed as CFO of the Department of Homeland Security, I implemented a process of remediation and accountability. Today, DHS has achieved four consecutive clean opinions. It was a bipartisan effort that depended upon strong support from Congress. If confirmed, and with this Committee's support, I believe we can bring similar change to the Department of Defense.

In closing, I would like to thank the Committee for its consideration of my nomination, and I look forward to answering your questions.