

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of the Committee, good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and for your consideration of my nomination to be the General Counsel of the Department of the Navy. I am deeply honored that President Trump has nominated me for this role, and I am also grateful to Secretary Phelan for his trust and confidence.

I've been very lucky in my life to have the support of many extraordinary people, but none more so than those who have joined me here today: My mother, Judge Reena Raggi, who recently celebrated 38 years on the federal bench. My wife, Corinne, and our daughter Elizabeth, who like all families of those who serve have borne the brunt of the sacrifice my career has required, but have always given me unflagging support. I also want to acknowledge my late father, David Denton Sr., an Air Force veteran who devoted much of his career to public service and who we lost far too soon. He showed me by example the wisdom of GK Chesterton's advice that "the real great man is the man who makes every man feel great." I try every day to make my Dad proud of the man I have become.

Senators, for two hundred and fifty years the Navy-Marine Corps team has been America's first line of defense, proving time and again its critical role in virtually every aspect of our national security. The Department of the Navy today stands in an unbroken line with those who have come before to answer the nation's call anytime, anywhere with honor, courage, and commitment. That mission has led me to join the Navy twice: first in uniform as a Navy Reserve intelligence officer; and then again as a career civilian attorney. I feel truly blessed that the President has given me the opportunity to continue that service as his nominee to be General Counsel.

But the Navy now faces a critical inflection point. President Trump, Secretary Hegseth, Secretary Phelan, and the members of this committee have all publicly recognized that transformational change is necessary for the Department of the Navy to continue to meet both the tests from adversaries, old and new, and the challenges of a rapidly evolving technological landscape. The Navy-Marine Corps team of now and of the future must be so confidently assured of victory in battle that our adversaries do not even seek to test our resolve. That is the demand of the warrior ethos, and it is the promise of Peace Through Strength.

All facets of that effort will require the support, the intellectual rigor, the creativity, and the tireless dedication of the Department of the Navy's Office of General Counsel, to ensure that the objectives our elected leaders have set are achieved in a manner consistent with the Constitution and laws of the United States.

If confirmed, I would hope to bring to that service a combination of education, experience, perspective, and commitment. I've been fortunate to have some extraordinary teachers and mentors in my life who had their own careers of public service. From them I learned not only the skills but also the values of a Government attorney. I have applied those lessons in my experience as an Assistant U.S. Attorney and Senior Trial Counsel, and continued as a civilian attorney in the Navy. I am very proud of the work we did to innovate creative legal tools to bring justice to adversaries threatening American citizens and interests.

I would hope to bring a broad and diverse perspective to the role of General Counsel. I have seen the Navy on the inside, both as a civilian and in uniform. I have worked in the broader national security legal community. And I have been an attorney in private practice—and am lucky to be married to one. All parts of Government, including lawyers, can benefit from the experience and the innovations of the private sector.

While I know that my education, experience, and perspective would stand me in good stead if confirmed, what undergirds all of that is my commitment. I grew up in New York City; I will never forget the ash and debris covering the roof of our apartment building on 9/11. I have known victims of crime and terrorism, and the law enforcement and military personnel who risked their lives—and sometimes lost them—to see justice done. Protecting our nation is to me not just a professional charge, but a personal calling.

President Trump, Secretary Phelan, the Congress, and the Americans we all serve have my total commitment that, if confirmed, I will leave it all on the field, every day, to ensure that the Department of the Navy has the best possible legal advice to meet the challenges of this moment. And that includes working closely with this Committee and with Congress as a whole.

It has been my privilege on several occasions now to raise my hand and ask for God's help to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. It would be the honor of a lifetime to be confirmed to do so again as the General Counsel of the Department of the Navy. Thank you again for allowing me to be here today, and I welcome your questions.