

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor and privilege to appear before you as the President's nominee for Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

I want to thank the President and Secretary of Defense for this opportunity and for their confidence in me. I am grateful for the time many of you have spent with me in recent weeks and thankful for the Committee's attention to my nomination.

Thank you Senator Tillis for that kind introduction.

I am privileged to have in attendance

- my wife Laura;
- my daughter Dr. Brooke Tata a proud civil servant with the Veterans Administration and her husband former Marine and Army national guardsman Peter Dominicus;
- my son Zachary, his 8 month pregnant wife Lindsey and my granddaughter Allie Kate are all watching from home in Hattiesburg, Mississippi;
- my Naval Academy graduate brother Bob Tata and his wife, Virginia State delegate Anne Ferrell Tata, who is a Navy wife and mom.
- My niece Peyton Tata Tackes and her husband Commander Rafe Tackes, an active duty E2D Hawkeye pilot;
- my niece Riley Tata and her husband Albert.
- My sister Kendall, a Virginia schoolteacher of over 40 years.

- My mother-in-law, Helen Fahey, a former U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia for eight years.
- My father-in-law, Kevin Fahey, and my brother-in-law, Jonathan Fahey and his family.
- And a host of West Point classmates, other family and friends from across the country.

It was my late father and mother, both career schoolteachers, who instilled in me and my siblings a desire, even an obligation, to live a life of public service and to do so with honor and integrity. In addition to being teachers, both parents led active political lives with my mother serving on the Virginia Beach School Board and my father serving 15 terms in the Virginia House of Delegates where he worked in bi-partisan fashion to advance the best interests of his district and the Old Dominion. If confirmed, I will work in the same spirit of relationship building and bipartisanship.

My own life as a public servant began with a 28-year military career, including commands in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Divisions, and 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, followed by four years as an education leader in Washington, DC and Raleigh, NC, and then as Secretary of Transportation for North Carolina. During my public service in North Carolina, I had the privilege of working closely with then Speaker of the House and now Senator Thom Tillis.

Having participated as a soldier in planning and executing training, operations, exercises, and/or combat in the Republic of

Korea, the Philippines, Haiti, Panama, Bosnia, Croatia, Hungary, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Iraq, and Afghanistan, my background has well prepared me for continued service to our nation. Having commanded and led organizations, both military and civilian, consisting of 35 to 25,000 personnel, I understand the personnel and readiness requirements to defend our nation.

Having served in a Governor's cabinet and as the superintendent of the 16<sup>th</sup> largest school system in the nation, I understand and respect the roles and responsibilities of executive branches and legislative bodies.

Importantly, much of my public service and private business career align with the statutory duties of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

As a leader across a vast array of critical government agencies for the last 40 years, I have participated in some fashion in the development, integration, and implementation of policies around:

- Recruiting and Retention
- Military Health on and off the Battlefield
- K through 12 Education
- Unit Readiness Reporting
- Personnel and Equipment Readiness
- Family Readiness
- Training Standards
- Safety Standards particularly with respect to blasts and aviation

If confirmed, my initial goals will be to focus on these areas with an eye on aligning personnel policy with National Security imperatives while increasing lethality and the warrior ethos. I will continue to listen, learn, and lead as I build a team that allows me to make the best recommendations to the Secretary and President. And I will always, as I have demonstrated over my decades of service, make my highest priority the health and welfare of our brave men and women in uniform and our DoD civilians and contract force.

I am grateful for your consideration of my nomination, and I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you.