

Sep 30, 2021

Department of Defense
OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND SECURITY REVIEW

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe and distinguished members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as you consider my nomination to be the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. I'd like to recognize my parents who are here today, Larry and Randy, who have always believed in me, living demonstrations of the integrity, selflessness, and loyalty that inspire my commitment to public service.

I am humbled by the confidence that President Biden and Secretaries Austin and Kendall have placed in me.

I also want to acknowledge former Army Secretary Eric Fanning, who over the course of the past twelve years has been my mentor, my friend, and my boss; challenging me while always providing me opportunities to learn, grow, and lead.

Although both my grandfathers served during World War II – one in Patton's 4th armored division during the Battle of the Bulge and the other flying B-29s in the Pacific for the Army Air Corps – I learned most of the details of their military experience after they passed away. And growing up in Los Angeles, I really didn't know – or even know of – anyone else that served. In fact, it wasn't until well into my late 20s that I developed close friendships with active duty servicemembers – Airmen, stationed at McChord -- when I was practicing law in Seattle.

This somewhat atypical journey toward a career in national security – finding a way to contribute as an openly gay man with limited military ties – revealed a unique window on just what makes our military the greatest in the world, and a view on how best to reinforce that success. I am forever grateful for our Nation's steady progress toward a more perfect union and for the opportunity that now empowers so many of us to bring our authentic selves to this important mission.

During previous appointments in the Pentagon, I was finally able to work alongside, engage, and befriend women and men in uniform, from across the different services, understand what motivates them, and gain insight into the unique challenges military service presents for their families.

Later on, I had occasion to experience military life from a different vantage point, visiting bases with Secretary Fanning as his Chief of Staff and hearing directly from junior enlisted Soldiers. From Iraq to Alaska to Guam, sharing meals – and frank conversations -- with diverse groups of young Soldiers stationed across the world gave me insights and perspectives that I could never have accessed from inside the Pentagon. To this day, their stories motivate me to fight to expand their opportunity and enhance their quality of life.

More recently, I've supported HR leaders at some of America's most innovative companies as they recruit, train, and engage talent while trying to inspire the next generation. I've learned that what sets apart top employers is having an impactful purpose and an important mission, where each employee is made to feel included and a part of the team.

There's little doubt that the Air Force and Space Force are uniquely advantaged when it comes to purpose and mission, but to fully leverage the expertise and talent of every Airman, Guardian, and Department civilian, there's more work to be done to ensure they – and their families – are supported, healthy, and safe.

If confirmed, I am eager to apply my public and private sector experience, my dedication to the mission, and my appreciation for people that support it to build on what's working and to improve what's not.

Thank you again for considering my nomination.