

**STATEMENT OF
JAMES WHALEY, CEO
MISSION ROLL CALL**

FOR THE RECORD

UNITED STATES SENATE & HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEES ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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Chairmans Tester & Bost, Ranking Members Moran & Takano, and distinguished members of the House & Senate Veteran's Affairs Committees; on behalf of Mission Roll Call, a national non-partisan 501(c)3, and the roughly 1.4 million veterans we support, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Jim Whaley, and I recently came aboard Mission Roll Call as its Chief Executive Officer. I am a retired US Army officer; married to an Army Veteran and a father of three daughters - two of which are currently serving overseas on active duty, and the other serving soldiers and their families at a non-profit. My family and I are committed to the cause of serving those who served, which is why I was drawn to the vision of Mission Roll Call. Mission Roll Call brings a unique and dynamic process to veteran advocacy.

We seek to give veterans an unfiltered voice, and give policymakers an unbiased view of how the veteran community feels about issues under consideration by this body.

Mission Roll call is a new organization that uses the power of technology to represent and advocate for our veterans and their families. We are the voice of the American Veteran. We are a movement providing veterans with a powerful, unified voice that is heard by our Nation's leaders and communities.

We are apolitical and represent the concerns that our veterans have across the nation. We believe that every veteran has a voice that needs to be heard. Almost half of all 18 million veterans within this country are not associated with any veteran service organization or the VA. Which means, when our leaders are talking about veteran issues half of our voices are not being heard. Mission Roll Call is a groundbreaking solution to this problem. We are leveraging technology to take their collective voices to the highest levels.

On a regular basis, we ask relevant and timely questions through polls and then share that with elected officials, policy makers and the media. We believe using the opinions of over 18 million veterans and their families is a powerful tool to bring to the attention of the American

people and demand action by decision makers in government. We have had over 260 thousand veteran's and their families respond to our polls, and we expect to double that number this year.

Our polls address the subjects that are of interest to our members, the veterans and their families. Our recent polls for 2024 range from addressing the level of support from the Veterans Administration, Suicide prevention, Mental Health issues, Food Insecurity concerns, and the continuing struggle for a successful transition to civilian life as well as the upcoming presidential elections.

We will share the direct impact of the polls and petitions with all of you. We also want the country to know our veterans and what's important to them. So, we're traveling the country in person and virtually, to speak with veterans and share their stories. Our strength is in our numbers and our voice being amplified over many social media platforms.

Through our Service-to-Service Initiative, we will provide our veteran community access through podcasts, videos and articles to address the challenges and concerns they are experiencing and give them access to success stories, programs and insightful discussion from other veteran support organizations, business leaders and veteran entrepreneurs.

We believe the values and habits the military instills do not disappear when veterans transition out. The work ethic, discipline, and confidence the military imparts can propel these patriots into successful careers post-service; and the data bears this out. Nearly two-thirds reporting their military service provided the training and skills they need when transitioning to post-military employment. A recent Mission Roll Call poll shows 97% of Americans said they believe veterans make great employees. Values of selflessness, duty and integrity naturally lead to leadership positions and roles in business, public service, health care, law enforcement and national security.

But as you know, successful transitions require much more than just employment. It requires the same sort of purpose veterans found during their service. We believe guiding them to continued service is the key. They want to be part of something bigger than themselves.

Ensuring successful transitions, providing necessary healthcare and benefits, and stopping suicide are all more than just moral imperatives, success or failure in these areas has a direct effect on national security.

In a Mission Roll Call research poll entitled “American Perspectives on Veteran Issues”, conducted last year and representative of the American population, we asked the American public if they would recommend military service to a young friend or family member. Only 35% of those

adults without a military connection responded affirmatively. Among those who would not recommend it, nearly 40 cited transition issues, 60% cited insufficient veteran benefits and concern about VA healthcare.

Fewer than 1% of Americans serve on active duty in any given year, and of the estimated 18-Million veterans in the U.S., 80% report having an immediate family member who served, and despite two decades of conflict in the Global War on Terror, a recent Mission Roll Call poll shows that nearly 70% of Generation Z does not know a veteran. Taken together, this means military service has become a family business being shouldered by a shrinking minority of American families.

We need to understand that the quality of life of those on active duty where 24% suffer food security challenges according to the Department of Defense coupled with the lack of confidence in VA support, is a national security threat in an ever-dangerous world.

The men and women I served with are strong, capable people who can accomplish anything they set their mind to. They don't need to be told they are broken and incapable of navigating their own post-service success. Rather, we simply need to ensure they have the tools and community to thrive. Congress and the VA play an important part to make sure they have the tools, and the VSOs in this room play a major part in ensuring they have the community. We must work collaboratively across party

lines and in conjunction with a coalition of veteran support groups to ensure success.

If given the right tools, veterans continue their service long after the military – in their families; communities; states; and indeed, to their country. Mission Roll Call is proud to be a part of this effort and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.