

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

September 30, 2025

Virginia Lt. Governor candidate John Reid accepts VMI Cadets' Debate Challenge; Calls Out His Opponent, Senator Hashmi, for "Refusal to Engage"

LEXINGTON, VA — In a striking moment at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) during the heavily contested Virginia elections, Republican candidate for Lieutenant Governor **John Reid** publicly committed to at least one debate and one Town Hall with his opponent, Senator Ghazala Hashmi, before Election Day—an invitation she has yet to acknowledge.

The Cadet, VMI's independent student-run publication since 1871, extended identical interview invitations to both candidates on August 7, 2025, ensuring transparency and fairness. *The Cadet* allowed each campaign to propose interview topics, conduct an interview using a standardized set of questions, and select the format of the interview. Despite repeated follow-ups, Senator Hashmi declined to participate, while Mr. Reid visited VMI on September 23 for an unscripted, unedited interview.

During the interview, Cadet Cody Bartmann pressed Mr. Reid on Senator Hashmi's absence:

"It doesn't surprise me, unfortunately, that Senator Hashmi has declined an interview," Mr. Reid responded. "She's declined almost every interview, and she's declined a public debate, which is also a part of Virginia tradition—an American tradition. Candidates seeking significant positions...there's an expectation that voters want to see the person engage, explain themselves, and be challenged. Unfortunately, Senator Hashmi does not share that basic American tradition."

When Cadet Richie O'Connell asked whether he would commit to a debate, Mr. Reid was unequivocal:

"I have volunteered to do 10 televised debates across the state. I made that commitment on the day that I became the Republican nominee. I reiterate it again today... Certainly, if we were to have a debate, I think I would equip myself very well in front of the public."

Mr. Reid further criticized Senator Hashmi's approach to transparency:

"I have been 100% accessible since I announced my run on January 27. Every day I do public events. When the press calls me, I make myself available. I stand for extended periods of time and talk to reporters, some of whom do not like me or my positions... You contrast that with Senator Hashmi, who has secret press conferences where you have to RSVP to even find the



location. The differences couldn't be more clear. In a democracy... I think I'm the only one that passes that test."

Senator Hashmi has not responded to the debate challenge nor to multiple final requests from *The Cadet*, the latest of which was sent to her campaign on September 29. That inquiry asked directly whether she would grant an interview, participate in a debate, and respond to Mr. Reid's public statements regarding her avoidance of open forums.

Editorial Commitment

Since its founding in 1871, *The Cadet* has served as an independent forum for ideas within the VMI community. For this election series, equal opportunities were extended to all statewide candidates for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Attorney General. *The Cadet* held its publication deadline open until September 30 to provide Senator Hashmi every chance to engage.

Her continued silence leaves cadets, alumni, and Virginia voters with only one side willing to stand openly before them.

Available Video

Video of Mr. Reid's full remarks and acceptance of the debate challenge at VMI is available for public viewing at this link:

<https://youtu.be/W3j9M-DAaWw>

4K B-Roll and video available upon request and may be used with credit given to *The Cadet*

FOR THE MEDIA DESIRING TO BROADCAST THE DEBATE

The Cadet seeks to collaborate with broadcast media to televise the debate. If your outlet is interested, please contact The Cadet Foundation using the information below.

SPONSORS

Donors and others desiring to co-sponsor or support the debate or host it as the debate location should contract the Point of Contact below.

Media Contact:

The Cadet Foundation
email: info@thecadetfoundation.org
Phone: (757) 869-6770
www.thecadetfoundation.org