



United States Senate
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman, ID-Conn.

Opening Statement of Chairman Joseph Lieberman
“Nomination of Rafael Borrás, Under Secretary for Management, Department of Homeland Security”
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
April 6, 2011
As Prepared for Delivery

Good morning, the hearing will come to order. Today, the Committee considers the nomination of Rafael Borrás to serve as Under Secretary for Management at the Department of Homeland Security.

Mr. Borrás, I think, brings tremendous energy and experience to what is an unglamorous but vitally important job. Everything that the Department does that the public sees depends in some critical way on what might be called the backroom functions that are the purview of the Under Secretary for Management: acquisition of private sector goods and services, for instance; hiring and encouraging the best in human capital; developing and running information technology systems; responsible financial management of the public’s dollars. These are among the very important responsibilities of this position.

And in a Department that was created only eight years ago, the Under Secretary for Management serves as a linchpin to bring together the disparate processes and procedures of what were once 22 separate agencies.

I believe that Mr. Borrás’ 27 years of experience in the public and private sectors overwhelmingly qualify him for the position to which he’s been nominated.

In government, Mr. Borrás has held senior management positions, including Assistant Secretary for Administration at the Commerce Department and Regional Administrator for the General Services Administration, with responsibilities that were quite similar to those he has been asked to undertake as Under Secretary for Management, and that prepared him for the kinds of challenges he would face at DHS. Earlier in his career, he held a position near and dear to my heart – he was Deputy City Manager of Hartford, obviously the Capital city of my home state of Connecticut – and in that position he balanced the city’s budget without raising taxes, no small feat during the recession of the early 1990s and left a lot of people in Hartford with very good feelings and memories of his service there.

Mr. Borrás also spent over ten years as a vice president at URS Corporation, a global engineering, construction and technical services firm, which provides services to both the public and private sectors.

When Mr. Borrás was first nominated to be Under Secretary for Management at DHS, in July of 2009, I concluded he was well qualified for the position and supported his nomination, which was reported out of our Committee by a 7-3 vote. Unfortunately others had doubts, and following this Committee’s vote in October 2009, a Senate hold was placed on his nomination, so a vote in the full Senate could not be scheduled. President Obama decided it was important enough to fill this position and was confident enough about Mr. Borrás’ abilities to put Mr. Borrás on the job through a recess appointment on March 27, 2010.

Now the nominee returns to the Committee with a year of experience under his belt as the Under Secretary. For anyone who had doubts when we first considered Mr. Borrás’s nomination, this year should have dispelled them. To make a long story short, I believe Mr. Borrás has proven himself to be a dedicated and highly capable leader in an incredibly challenging position. In other words, he has earned Senate confirmation.

In his single year as Under Secretary, I believe Mr. Borrás has already done much to strengthen the management of DHS and the Department needs him to continue in this position of critical importance.

Let me briefly cite a few of the management accomplishments to which Mr. Borrás has significantly contributed since he became Under Secretary for Management.

To begin with, Mr. Borrás has made progress in strengthening the Department's acquisition processes. Too often over its eight-year history DHS has been plagued with poorly-planned purchases that led to unsuccessful projects that wasted taxpayers' money. Mr. Borrás has built on the efforts of his predecessors, implementing and improving the processes of the Acquisition Review Board (ARB) they created to review major investments across the Department. He is also putting in place a system where high-risk acquisitions are monitored not just by the ARB at certain mileposts – which can be a year or more apart – but more continually through more focused Executive Steering Committees. And he has led efforts to refocus several troubled acquisitions, ensuring that DHS is using its resources wisely in a fiscally difficult time.

Mr. Borrás has also played a leading role in reviewing the Department's workforce needs and its use of contractors, ensuring that the Department is using federal employees and outside contractors in a way that is appropriate and cost-effective.

In the budget process this year, Mr. Borrás took a cross-department look and helped identify savings and efficiencies that could be achieved by eliminating overlap and redundancies among DHS components. Ultimately, the FY 2012 budget for DHS proposed \$800 million in savings through greater administrative efficiency.

Mr. Borrás has also been overseeing the development of the Department's new headquarters on the St. Elizabeth's campus, leveraging his experiences at GSA and working for a major private sector construction and engineering firm. This major project – the largest U.S. government building project in the nation right now – is currently on budget and on time.

And of particular note are Mr. Borrás' efforts to address the issues identified by the Government Accountability Office in its "high-risk list." Since the creation of DHS, the implementation and transformation of the Department has been on GAO's "high risk list" that is published at the beginning of each Congress. This year, for the first time, GAO has offered some hope that the Department is on a path to improvement and, possibly, removal from this list in the foreseeable future. GAO found that DHS "has taken action to implement, transform, and strengthen its management functions." They noted, too, that in January of this year, DHS produced an updated Integrated Strategy for High Risk Management, explaining how DHS would address the high-risk designation – a strategy Mr. Borrás spearheaded.

Since his appointment, Mr. Borrás has also been in charge of managing the relationship with GAO – a relationship that was once fraught with mutual distrust – but which under his leadership appears to have markedly improved.

It is also worth noting that Mr. Borrás is highly respected by other senior leaders within the Department. For example, Secret Service Director Mark Sullivan – who is a non-political appointee with 33 years of law enforcement experience– who wrote a glowing letter of endorsement for Mr. Borrás and asked – and I quote – that this "dedicated and talented professional" continue as the Under Secretary for Management.

Director Sullivan added: "[Mr. Borrás] has taken a proactive approach to enhance his understanding of the Secret Service, our operational requirements, and our contributions to the DHS mission. He effectively communicates with DHS leadership and implements policies to allow components the opportunity to leverage and maximize DHS assets and resources to improve operational effectiveness and efficiency."

That's a very important and influential comment.

As the saying goes: "Nothing succeeds like success." And nothing guarantees future success better than rewarding it when we see it.

Mr. Borrás's recess appointment expires at the end of this year. If the Senate fails to confirm him before then, I believe it would be a tremendous loss for the Department. I therefore strongly urge my colleagues on the Committee to support Mr. Borrás's confirmation as Under Secretary for Management at DHS so he can continue to bring his expertise and leadership to bear on the challenges that face the Department as it works to become the highly effective and efficient Department we need it to be for the security of all Americans.

Sen. Collins.