

Senator Dianne Feinstein
Statement of introduction for the nomination of Alejandro N. Mayorkas to be Deputy
Secretary for the Department of Homeland Security
July 25, 2013

It is a pleasure for me to introduce President Obama's nominee for Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Alejandro Mayorkas.

I have known Ali for many years and am proud to have recommended him to President Clinton for the position of United States Attorney for the Central District of California as well as to President Obama for his current position as Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The role of Deputy Secretary within the department is really an important one. The deputy secretary is charged with overseeing the agency's efforts to counter terrorism and enhance the security and management of our borders, while facilitating trade and travel, and enforcing our immigration laws.

Additionally, this secretary assists in the safeguarding and security of cyberspace and provides support for national and economic security in times of disaster in coordination with federal, state, local, international and private sector partners.

Mr. Mayorkas I believe is well-qualified for this position. He brings to this office a diverse background and set of experiences in both the private and public sectors.

Born in Havana, Cuba, Mr. Mayorkas earned his B.A. with distinction from the University of California, Berkeley in 1981. He earned his law degree from Loyola School in 1985.

Those who have enjoyed the opportunity to work with him regard him as being highly intelligent, thoughtful, kind, compassionate and dedicated to doing the "right thing."

From 1989 to 1998, he served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California where he prosecuted a wide array of federal crimes, specializing in the prosecution of white-collar crime. Federal law enforcement agencies recognized his success with multiple awards. For example, he received commendations from FBI Director Louis Freeh for his successful prosecution of Operation PolarCap, the largest money laundering case in the nation at the time.

He continued to distinguish himself by becoming the first U.S. Attorney in the Central District of California to be appointed from within the office. He created the Civil Rights Section in the office to prosecute hate crimes.

He developed an innovative program to address violent crime by targeting criminals' possession of firearms, prosecuting street gangs, and at the same time developing after-school programs to help at-risk youth discover and realize their potential. He uniquely demonstrated the ability to simultaneously be firm with criminals, protective with the innocent and supportive and empowering to our future leaders.

As supported by the many law enforcement and community awards he received during his tenure as U.S. Attorney, Mr. Mayorkas' accomplishments extended beyond his district.

He successfully expanded his office's community outreach programs and cooperation with international players in the fight against crime. He directly resolved cases while also overseeing hundreds of attorneys addressing immigration matters, which included complex and sensitive prosecution of individuals and rings producing false immigration documents, illegal reentry cases and alien smuggling conspiracies.

The Administrator for the Drug Enforcement Administration, Michele Leonhart, noted "he was instrumental in broadening collaboration between law enforcement agencies to address violent crime and expanded cooperation with other nations to address the growing threat of transnational crime."

Combined with his prosecuting white collar crime, public corruption, computer-related crime and international money laundering, she wrote that such a "broad base of experience... provides him with a unique perspective on threats to national security."

He further developed his sharp legal skills and management experience as a partner at O'Melveny & Myers from 2001 to 2009 where he represented companies in high-profile and sensitive government enforcement cases. He was recognized by his worldwide firm with an annual award for "leadership, excellence and citizenship," and was named by the National Law Journal as one of the "50 Most Influential Minority Lawyers in America" in 2008.

Since his confirmation as director of USCIS four years ago in 2009, he has continued to exert his positive influence through leadership, excellence and citizenship in accomplishing the agency's mission. He has improved the immigration services and policies of USCIS by realigning its priorities for a modern-day America that seeks to preserve its legacy as a nation of immigrants while ensuring national security and public safety—no easy task.

Throughout his current role, he has successfully preserved and increased the integrity of our immigration laws by decreasing fraud and bringing accountability to our immigration system. He has worked to secure our nation's criminal and immigration laws in the face of increasing gang and border violence.

As technology advances, so too have our needs to prevent fraud and to safeguard immigration documents from tampering. Mr. Mayorkas has confronted that challenge by enhancing the scope and frequency of national security vetting of applicants for immigration benefits and by redesigning immigration documentation with enhanced security features.

He has led USCIS in the other half of its mission, to preserve the role of America as a just nation that treats immigrants at our shores humanely and with an eye toward the potential they bring to our nation.

To combat notario fraud and other unscrupulous practices that undermine the integrity of the immigration system, Mr. Mayorkas launched the Unauthorized Practice of Immigration Law initiative. It is a nationwide collaborative effort with federal, state and municipal agencies and enforcement authorities that works to raise awareness among immigrant communities and to investigate and prosecute wrongdoers.

After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, he developed and implemented a humanitarian parole program on an emergency basis to save orphans and unite children with their adoptive families here.

Significantly, under President Obama's directive to grant deferred action to immigrants who were brought to this country as children and who seek to legally remain in the United States, Mr. Mayorkas swiftly implemented the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals initiative in 60 days. In less than one year, over half a million people have applied to remain in the United States, the only home they've known.

He has realigned the agency's organizational structure, including 246 offices and facilities worldwide, to more accurately serve key priorities and achieve efficiency. He has stringent budget reviews that have resulted in cost-saving measures of \$160 million in budget cuts for FY10.

Mr. Chairman, I took an additional amount of time because I know there are currents swirling around Mr. Mayorkas's confirmation. But I also know that this is an incredibly special human being who is well deserving of this position and I know that this committee will do the right thing and confirm him for nomination to the floor of the Senate.