

Hearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Mr. Alejandro N. Mayorkas
Nominee for Secretary of Department of Homeland Security
January 19, 2021

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, Members of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee,

I am honored to appear before you as the Nominee to be the next Secretary of the United States Department of Homeland Security. It would be the greatest privilege of my life to return to the Department and lead the nearly 240,000 men and women who dedicate their talent and energy to the safety and security of our Nation.

I appear before you not alone, but with and because of my family. My wife Tanya and our daughters Giselle and Mimi enable and inspire me to serve. They understand that my heart is in government service. They are the heart of my heart. To them I say, I love you.

The principles of homeland and security have been tremendously important in shaping my life. My father and mother brought me to this country to escape communism and to provide me with the security, opportunity, and pride that American citizenship brings to each of us. I was raised to appreciate each day what this country has meant for our family, and the blessing it is to know it as our homeland.

The love for this country that I learned from my parents made the January 6 attack on the Capitol all the more horrifying. We still have much to learn about what happened that day and what led up to the insurrection. If I should have the honor of being confirmed, I will do everything I can to ensure that the tragic loss of life, the assault on law enforcement, the desecration of the building that stands as one of the three pillars of our democracy, and the terror felt by you, your colleagues, staff, and everyone present, will not happen again.

The Department of Homeland Security bears an extraordinary weight on behalf of the American people — the weight of grave challenges, seen and unseen. Cyber attacks that undermine our security and the integrity of our information systems. The threat of both foreign and domestic terrorism. Pandemics that throw every part of American life off of its axis. And extreme weather events that threaten lives and livelihoods.

That is to say nothing of maintaining border security, providing humanitarian relief, protecting our critical infrastructure, or the many other responsibilities that the men and women of the Department fulfill each day.

If I have the privilege of serving as Secretary, I will work day and night to support the Department's great workforce and ensure that it is able to execute its responsibilities successfully, with honor and dignity. I will dedicate myself to equipping the Department's men and women with the tools and resources they need and providing them with the opportunities they deserve. I will do so in partnership with you and with the other Members of Congress, and with the Department's many other critical partners throughout the country.

The Department of Homeland Security is, fundamentally, a department of partnerships. To combat the threat of terrorism, the Department must work with our international partners, other federal agencies, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, and our Nation's noble first-responders. To enhance our cybersecurity, the Department depends upon and must strengthen its cooperation with the private sector. To be prepared for and resilient to natural disasters, the Department must work with state, local, tribal, and territorial governments and our brave local fire and emergency personnel. To facilitate and enhance our trade and travel, it must innovate and align its research and development with the efforts of private industry and academic institutions. To meet the challenges and opportunities of migration, it needs to collaborate with other nations, international organizations, and non-profit service providers. To succeed, the Department must work with the many communities it serves.

This Committee and your colleagues in the Senate and the House of Representatives are at the forefront of the Department's partners. We must work closely with you as you help determine the funding upon which the Department relies, promulgate the laws that it is charged to enforce, and provide the oversight that ensures its accountability to the American people. As your partner, the Department must be collaborative, open and transparent, and at all times forthright with you — even in times of disagreement. If I am confirmed as the next Secretary, the Department will meet its responsibilities to you.

I began in government service as a federal prosecutor. After more than eight years of trying cases before juries, I served more than three years as a Senate-confirmed United States Attorney. As a prosecutor, the law and the facts of a case were my foundation and my guide, and they have remained my North Star ever since. I have worked in support of federal agents and officers, local law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians. I have worked in support of all the men and women throughout the Department of Homeland Security and in public service who work in, and even rush into, harm's way to protect us all. I have not for a single moment lost sight of what a privilege and honor it is to do so, nor of the obligations it carries on our Nation's behalf. I look forward to continuing that service.

Thank you.