

**Statement of Jonathan Eugene Meyer**

**Nominee for General Counsel  
Department of Homeland Security**

**Before the  
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**

**May 27, 2021**

Good Morning Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, and distinguished members of the Committee.

I am honored to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as General Counsel of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). I am grateful to the President and to Secretary Mayorkas for the trust they have placed in me, and to you for your consideration of my nomination. I would also like to thank Senator Brown for his kind introduction. As a son of Cincinnati, Ohio, I am deeply honored to have one of my Senators introduce me, while the other is serving as Ranking Member of this Committee.

I am also grateful to my family and friends for their support through this process. In particular, I would like to recognize my wife, Dr. Lauren Strauss, who is here with me today, along with our son, Ezra Meyer, and our younger daughter Naomi Meyer. Not here today, but in my mind and heart, is our oldest child, Corporal Jordana Meyer, who is currently serving in the Israel Defense Forces, and – her military schedule permitting – is watching this hearing online. Also watching online are my parents, Rabbi Margie Meyer and Professor Michael Meyer. We are a close family, and I value their love and support above all else.

It would be the highest honor of my professional life to be confirmed as General Counsel of DHS, to return to the office where I worked previously, and to lead the 2,500 attorneys who serve there. They are committed public servants and talented lawyers. I am also grateful for the support of four former General Counsels of DHS – two Democrats and two Republicans – who have endorsed my nomination.

I have devoted most of my 29-year legal career to public service. I spent seven years on Capitol Hill, serving in both chambers, and on both sides of the aisle. I served in the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, in both career and political positions. And I have practiced law at three major law firms, including my current professional home, Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton. I am grateful to my Sheppard Mullin colleagues for their support as well. I believe all of these experiences have prepared me for the position to which I have been nominated.

The Office of the General Counsel (OGC) plays a vital role in the proper functioning of DHS. With the able assistance of OGC attorneys, the General Counsel serves as the chief legal officer of the Department and the senior legal advisor to the Secretary and other officials. If confirmed, I intend to reinvigorate, unify, and empower the attorneys of OGC. Too often too little heed is

paid to the experienced and insightful wisdom of the rank and file of OGC. I have served with the men and women of DHS OGC. I know them. And I know the immense value and incisive legal acumen that they bring to bear on behalf of the American people. In my view, the successful General Counsel is the one who appreciates these attributes and marshals them in service of our country.

One final personal note. Exactly 90 years ago, my grandfather, Karl Mattaeus Meyer, of blessed memory, was admitted to the bar and went to work for his government. A mere two years later, however, that career ended suddenly, when he was fired for being a Jew. Although he and his family – including my father – escaped Nazi Germany in 1941, and built wonderful new lives here, my grandfather, for whom my son is named, never practiced law again.

I have always viewed my legal career as a continuation of the one my grandfather began, but could not complete. In every legal office I have occupied, the first items to go up on the wall, and the last to be taken down, are two documents framed side by side – his hiring, and his firing by the Nazis. They serve as a reminder to me of the critical role that lawyers must play in preserving democracy and protecting our rights. If I am confirmed, you have my solemn promise that I will always remain true to those values.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.