

Opening Statement of Michael O’Keefe
Nominee to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia
May 15, 2013

Thank you, Chairman Begich for chairing today’s hearing. I also would like to convey my appreciation to Senator Carper and Senator Coburn and the committee staff for scheduling this hearing and affording me such courtesy. It is an honor to be a nominee for Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. I would like to thank Judge Emmet Sullivan and the D.C. Judicial Nomination Commission for referring me to the White House and President Barack Obama for nominating me for this position. Thank you Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton for your kind words in introducing me this afternoon. I would like to acknowledge the members of the Superior Court community, the judges, lawyers, U.S. Marshals, and support staff, whose passion for justice and dedication to the people of the District of Columbia is an inspiration.

I would like to thank my wife Susan, who has encouraged me to pursue a life of public service. Unfortunately, she is in Ireland today on a business trip, but I trust she is watching this hearing on her laptop. My oldest son Dylan, who is taking a break from studying for high school final exams, is here, however. My two other children, Quinn and Maeve, are in elementary school today. I would like to thank Scott and Courtney Pastrick, my brother-in-law and sister-in-law, who are present and who center our family here in Washington. I am sorry to say that my parents, the late Francis and Mary O’Keefe, did not live to see this moment. My father, who was a first-generation American, served in World War II, and obtained his law degree at night with the help of the GI bill, would have been especially proud. My mother, also a first generation American, who raised nine children with a smile on her face, would have loved to be here. Finally, I would like to thank my brother, Dr. Robert O’Keefe, without whose support I would never have been able to attend law school.

I am lucky to have been raised in a number of interesting locations around the world, but Washington, D.C. is my home. I first came to Washington 26 years ago as a recent college graduate with a desire to pursue a career in public service. While working in the U.S. Senate, I attended law school in the evening at American University, where I learned to love the law. Although I always had an interest in litigation, it was not until I served as a juror on a homicide case in D.C. Superior Court in 1994, that I was drawn to trial advocacy. I began accepting appointments in D.C. Superior Court representing low-income defendants and families while working for the law firm of O’Connor & Hannan. The work was so satisfying that by 1998, I left the firm to start my solo practice and have never looked back. For the past 19 years, I have represented clients in nearly every division of D.C. Superior Court, with the majority of my cases in the criminal and family divisions. Having handled so many matters in Superior Court, I have a strong appreciation of the essential qualities that make a great judge. I would be honored to put my experience to work ensuring that the people of this city receive an impartial and thoughtful consideration of their cases, and that justice is done, with fairness and respect for all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to answer any questions.