

Opening Statement of Sarah R. Saldaña
Nominee for Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement,
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
before the
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
September 17, 2014

Mr. Chairman, Dr. Coburn, and Senators of this Committee, thank you for considering my nomination for Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Senator Cornyn, I truly appreciate the time you have taken from your schedule to introduce me to this distinguished Committee. Thank you for your kind words and your support throughout the years.

I would like to introduce my family: my husband of 26 years, Don Templin; my sister, Marisela Saldaña – who serves as a Texas district court judge; my brother, Lupe Saldaña, and his daughter – my niece -- Cindy Saldaña. I'm also joined by some dear friends who were willing to leave the great state of Texas to be here with me today.

I am honored by the trust and confidence the President has shown me by nominating me for this position. I am grateful for the support of Secretary Johnson and the others at ICE back in my District with whom I have worked for years now, as well as those I have met here in the Washington D.C. area over the last few days.

Senators, I sit here before you as a third-generation American, the youngest of 7 children, raised by my Mother, essentially on her own, in South Texas. I'd like you to know her name, Inez Garcia Saldaña, and I can only imagine the enormous pride she would feel -- if she were living -- to see me here appearing before this esteemed Committee of the United States Senate, discussing the responsibilities of this office so critically important to our country and my nomination by the President of the United States. My mother is singularly responsible for my being the person I am today and she taught me, not even so much through her words as through her deeds, the values of self-reliance, hard work and giving of yourself to others. In this brood of 7 siblings, I have four brothers, who have divided my loyalties to the various branches of the military through their service: 2 of my brothers are Marines, as is my husband, Don; one served in the United States Navy; and another, David, is a Purple Heart recipient who served with the United States Army in Vietnam.

While I have no military experience myself, I have served my country in various capacities, as an Assistant United States Attorney and currently, as the United States Attorney, the chief federal law enforcement officer in the Northern District of Texas, based in Dallas. I can say unequivocally that these have been the best years of my professional life. If I am confirmed, I will continue to serve this Government and its people tirelessly and to the very best of my ability.

In my years at the U.S. Attorney's Office, I have worked closely with the employees of ICE in my district to assist them in tackling the enormous issues before the country which come within

the mission of the agency. That critical mission is to ensure homeland security and public safety through the enforcement of federal laws governing international trade, immigration and customs. I personally have prosecuted a number of human trafficking, smuggling, and immigration cases. I have also confronted these issues on a national level in my service on the United States Attorney General's Advisory Committee and its subcommittees on Border and Immigration, Cyber Crimes and Intellectual Property, Law Enforcement and Community Coordination, and White Collar and Healthcare Fraud.

I promise that, if confirmed, I will continue the cooperation between ICE and the Department of Justice and its various components, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the Drug Enforcement Administration as well as other departments and agencies who share the public safety goals of ICE. I have the greatest respect and admiration for these public servants who work tirelessly on behalf of the American people, often at their own personal peril and often without public acclaim.

I promise to continue to improve the administration of the Agency, so that the public is well-served. In my current role as United States Attorney, I have worked to instill pride and professionalism in the employees of my office and I promise that, if I am confirmed, I will seek to do the same for the dedicated employees of ICE. Quite frankly, I'm often the one who is inspired by their extraordinary work and I do my best to share that inspiration with the people I serve around the State of Texas and the country.

I pledge that I will be cooperative and transparent with this Committee and others in the Congress. I recognize that you are the lawmakers and that we, the agencies, implement the law. As United States Attorney, I am ever mindful that one of my most important responsibilities is to serve as the steward of the taxpayer's monies. I work every day, and will continue to do so, to ensure that those monies are efficiently managed and spent towards the goal of ensuring the public safety and security of the American people.

I understand the enormity of the task before me, should I be confirmed, but neither am I intimidated by it. I have often told my colleagues at the Department of Justice and others that I have never been so proud in my life as when I first stood before a jury in a federal courtroom and said: "My Name is Sarah Saldaña and I represent the United States of America." I am equally proud saying the same before you now. I hope to be confirmed as Assistant Secretary of Immigration and Customs Enforcement to join you in your efforts to promote public safety and to ensure homeland security. Thank you.