

Statement of Stevan E. Bunnell

**Nominee for General Counsel,
U.S. Department of Homeland Security**

Before the

Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

September 18, 2013

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Coburn, and Members of the Committee. Let me also thank my good friend Ken Wainstein for his very kind introduction today and his support throughout the confirmation process.

It is an honor for me to be here today as the nominee to be General Counsel of the Department of Homeland Security. I thank the President for his confidence in me, and I thank the Committee for moving forward so expeditiously on my nomination.

I would also like to thank and recognize the members of my family who are here today: My wonderful wife, Laura, who has always been so supportive of my passion for public service, despite the many sacrifices it imposes on her and on her own successful law practice. I don't know how she does it all, but I do know that she is truly my better half.

We have two sons -- Philip, who is in college in California, and could not be here today, and Daniel, who is a senior in high school, and is here today. Philip and Daniel are not only my pride and joy, they are also a reminder to me that the work being done on homeland security today is not just about keeping us safe in the present, it is about building a foundation for a safe,

secure, and resilient future for the next generation, and making sure that future generations enjoy not only physical security, but also the fundamental rights and freedoms that we all hold dear.

I am grateful that my parents, Fred and Alice Bunnell, are here today. Both of my parents are retired teachers. They instilled in me and my sisters a strong ethic of service, of giving back. They continue to be an inspiration to me.

I would also like to thank my two sisters, Becky, who works for the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta (and is here today), and Ann, who is a social worker in Chicago. I owe them special thanks for helping me, as only siblings can, to learn at a young age how to share toys, share chores, and work together with people I do not command or control. Those sibling experiences provided a foundation for skills that have served me well in life so far, and are skills I'm sure I will continue to rely on, if I am confirmed.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife's parents, Rod and Carla Hills, for being here today, and for being role models not just for me, but for anyone who aspires to serve our country with distinction and integrity at the highest levels of government.

I'm excited about the possibility of returning to public service. I believe my prior experience in government and my more recent experience managing lawyers in a leading national law firm have prepared me well for the diverse challenges I would face if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed. I spent 17 years as a career federal prosecutor. In the course of that experience, I prosecuted everything from shoplifting cases to homicides, from narcotics conspiracies to sensitive public corruption cases. I also had an opportunity during my time at DOJ to work in the front office of the Criminal Division with then Assistant Attorney General

Michael Chertoff and others, and help oversee the Criminal Division's response to the attacks of 9/11.

With respect to the management of lawyers, my experience includes serving as Chief of the Criminal Division in the U.S. Attorney's Office in DC, which is the largest U.S. Attorney's Office in the country, and now, in private practice, managing the DC Office of a major law firm.

The General Counsel of DHS has a number of critical roles and challenging responsibilities. These include:

- providing legal advice to the Secretary and the senior leadership of the Department
- ensuring that the Department's policies and operations comply with Constitutional, statutory, and other legal and regulatory authorities, including laws that safeguard the fundamental rights and liberties of the American people
- leading and managing over 1800 lawyers, and doing so in a way that promotes morale, high performance, and efficiency.

If I'm confirmed, I would be honored to have an opportunity to work with, and in support of, the tens of thousands of dedicated men and women at DHS, who work day in and day out to carry out that vital mission.

One of the things I loved about being an Assistant U.S. Attorney was standing up in court and saying, "Steve Bunnell on behalf of the United States." I loved having the United States as my client. In fact, I loved it so much that after I left DOJ, when I first went to court as a defense

attorney, I stood up and introduced myself on the record as “Steve Bunnell on behalf of the United States.” The judge was nice about it, but I was lucky that my client didn’t fire me.

If I’m fortunate enough to be confirmed, one of the things that will mean a lot to me is once again being able to say -- accurately -- that I’m a lawyer for the United States. There is no better client a lawyer can have.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.