

Statement of Joseph V. Cuffari
Nominee to be the Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Senate Committee on Homeland and Governmental Affairs

March 5, 2019

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Peters, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you today to be considered by this Committee as President Trump's nominee to be the next Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

I am very grateful to the President and to Secretary Nielsen for the confidence they have placed in me for this critical position. I thank Senator McSally for her very kind introduction. Many thanks to Senators Kyl, Flake, and Sinema and Governors Ducey and Brewer and their staffs for their support. I also thank the Members of this Committee and their staff for meeting with me as part of my nomination process. If I am confirmed, I pledge to continue our discussions regarding matters of mutual interest and concern.

I thank my wife, Lynn; son Joey; and daughter-in-law, Grace, for supporting me through this process. Lynn and I have been married for more than 35 years, having met through the Italian Language Department at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona. I promised her that we would travel and that our life would be an adventure. Rest assured that after a dozen moves, with the military and federal service, we went around the world and eventually circled back to Tucson. Lynn, it's been a ride! We are blessed to have Joey and Grace as our wingmen.

Much as things change over the decades, one thing remains firm—the support, friendship, and guidance from my parents, Vincent and Connie; my brother, Tony; and my in-laws, Raymond and Rosemary Mazza. Equally as important are those same qualities that are given by my cousins, friends, and other associates who came from as far as Arizona, Philadelphia, and the other territories of the country. I also extend a special thanks to those who keep me looking trim—my barbers Tony and Mario.

I owe all that I have to my family, in particular the determination, foresight, and fortitude of my grandparents. By coming to America, they ensured that the generations that followed them would have special gifts—that is, to live in the greatest country in the world and to be afforded opportunities they did not have. In the early 1900s, my grandfathers took long sea voyages from Italy to the United States and settled in Philadelphia. As the United States entered World War I, my grandfathers enlisted in the U.S. Army and were part of combat engineering teams on the frontlines. Miraculously, they survived and returned to Philadelphia to start families. Now, 100 years later as I appear before you as a nominee, I thank them and all our veterans for their service to our country.

I have spent my entire adult life in public service. My calling began when I enlisted in the U.S. Air Force after graduating from high school in 1977. My parents actually had to sign for me

since I was not yet 18 years old. Coincidentally, my father served in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War, and we entered active duty on the same date but several decades apart.

For the past 40 years, I have been honored to have served with the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of federal or state governments. My service includes a career in the U.S. Air Force on Active Duty, in the Reserves, and in the Arizona Air National Guard. That time has been coupled with 20 years of experience with the U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General and a combined 12 years with components of the Department of Defense Office of the Inspector General. During that time, I worked with seven Inspectors General and am grateful to them for their mentorship, guidance, and support.

I have been privileged to be part of a team that worked with senior officials to form the framework to create an Office of the Inspector General in the Ministry of the Interior for an emerging nation. I have also augmented my practical knowledge of the Inspectors General by completing advanced academic studies of the critical role that office has within government.

My academic studies support the assertion that government agencies should be self-checking, but more importantly, they should also be subject to independent oversight. In creating the Offices of Inspector General, I believe Congress recognized the shortfall of permitting agencies to exclusively investigate themselves. If I am confirmed, I commit to being an honest broker of information and to seek the truth. I am mindful that the powers bestowed upon an Inspector General are vast. Therefore, if confirmed, I will ensure that the DHS Office of Inspector General is judicious in exercising its power and investigates an allegation and not an individual person. It is in that spirit that I will be fair and objective in my undertakings to investigate, audit, and inspect departmental employees and operations.

Since 1789, when the United States Marshals Service was created, numerous federal law enforcement agencies have been established to address and respond to the ever-increasing number of federal laws and challenges. The Homeland Security Act of 2002, which created DHS, called for merging 22 distinct agencies under one secretary. Now with more than 240,000 employees, management challenges remain.

As Secretary Nielsen has noted, DHS has a long-standing commitment to combating fraud, waste, and abuse. Historically, allegations regarding those matters have steadily eroded society's confidence in public administration. They cause society to question government's continued ability to provide efficient and effective services. If I am confirmed, I will work with Congress to augment its vital oversight responsibilities.

I believe Inspectors General fill another equally important role as well—the duty to highlight effective and efficient services that are discovered during the course of investigations, audits, and inspections. If confirmed, I will highlight those best practices with an equal degree of transparency.

To the dedicated men and women of the DHS Office of the Inspector General, I commit to you, that if I am confirmed, I will be your advocate and champion the critical work you have done and continue to do for the American people. Thank you for your service.

To the Committee, I sincerely appreciate your consideration of my nomination and I look forward to answering your questions.