

TESTIMONY OF  
ALEJANDRO N. MAYORKAS  
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BEFORE THE UNITED STATES SENATE  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
JULY 25, 2013

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Coburn, Members of the Committee,

I am deeply honored by the President's nomination and the opportunity to appear before you.

In my professional life I have had the privilege of serving our country for nearly sixteen years. My love of our country and my drive to serve it are grounded in my family history and upbringing. My parents brought my sister and me to this country as political refugees in 1960, having escaped the communist takeover of Cuba. Our parents instilled in their children a deep and everlasting appreciation for the freedoms and liberties that define our country and an abiding respect for its laws. Our nation, they taught us, is like no other, and its qualities are never to be taken for granted but instead cherished and protected.

My parents also taught us what it means to live a principled life, a life grounded in values, ethics, honor, and integrity. Their teachings, advice, lectures, admonitions, and support were strong but not more powerful than the lesson of example: they conducted themselves as I aspire to lead my life. As this Committee considers whatever I have accomplished, please understand that it is a glimpse into the character of my parents.

For nearly twelve years I served our country as a federal prosecutor in the United States Attorney's Office for the Central District of California. Each and every day, day and night and most often seven days a week, I enforced the laws of this land and I did so aggressively and with distinction. As an Assistant United States Attorney I prosecuted and tried cases against narcotics traffickers, violent criminals, money launderers, white collar criminals, illegal telemarketers, immigrant smugglers, and many others. I pursued justice forcefully, demanded accountability, and vindicated the rights of victims and our communities. When I became the Chief of the office's General Crimes Section, I trained new Assistant United States Attorneys how to prosecute and try cases on behalf of the federal government, and I instilled in them the principles of federal prosecution and the ideals of law enforcement and public service.

Upon the recommendation of Senator Dianne Feinstein and the United States Senate's confirmation, I became the first United States Attorney in the Central District of California to be promoted to the position from within the office. I served as the chief federal law enforcement officer in the largest federal judicial district in the nation, leading an office of 240 Assistant United States Attorneys in the prosecution of cases to protect a jurisdiction of more than 180 cities and a population of more than 18 million people. We partnered and collaborated with law enforcement at all levels of government – federal, state, tribal, and local – in our collective, forceful, and unwavering pursuit of justice.

For the past nearly four years I have had the privilege of serving as the Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, an agency within the Department of Homeland Security whose workforce and reach span the globe as we administer the largest immigration system in the world. To this position I have brought my foundation and skills as a federal prosecutor and as a leader and manager. With an incredibly talented and dedicated workforce, we have prioritized and strengthened our agency's national security safeguards and more vigorously combated fraud; we have become more transparent and accountable to our inspectors, overseers, and the public we together serve; we have realigned our organizational structure to better execute our priorities and deliver greater efficiency; and, we have introduced and maintained greater fiscal discipline to ensure that we are careful stewards of the funds we receive.

Now I am before you as the President's nominee to be the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. I am deeply honored to be here and excited by the opportunity – the privilege – to work with you and with the men and women of the Department of Homeland Security to effectively and efficiently help secure our country's homeland. The Department has achieved a great deal in advancing the security of our nation, and its progress is the result of strong leadership, this Committee's oversight, and the selfless, hard work of the Department's employees who are committed to the mission and the calling of public service.

There are challenges and there are opportunities. Terrorist threats against our country are persistent and evolving, natural forces cause disasters that cost lives and wreak life-altering damage, and emerging cyber threats must be managed while protecting privacy and civil liberties and maintaining the Internet as an engine of economic growth. The Department has developed and matured in systems and processes, yet further progress is imperative. The Department must eliminate management risks that are high and the subjects of which are fundamental to good government; it must build on the significant achievements of former Deputy Secretary Jane Holl Lute. The Department must be better integrated internally, across the federal government, and with its critical and dedicated partners that are first-responders in state, local, and tribal governments, and in the private sector. The firefighters, police officers, sheriffs, emergency personnel, and critical infrastructure owners and operators across our country understand better than most the challenges of protecting, preparing, and responding to the human and natural threats we confront.

We have the capabilities to successfully address the challenges and seize the opportunities. The men and women of the Department are its greatest resource, and leadership and management can and must inspire and deliver the best in them. Through efficient collaboration and coordination with our partners at all levels of government and in the private sector, we can maximize valuable resources and spare unnecessary effort and expense. This Committee's oversight provides a critical catalyst for improvement and your rightful demands for accountability ensure disciplined and scrupulous adherence to the principles and values of good government.

I have the experience, ability, character, and commitment to help lead and manage the Department and work closely with this Committee to successfully address the challenges and seize the opportunities. I have fought in the crucible of the courtroom, led task forces and trained cadres of new prosecutors, led federal law enforcement in the largest federal judicial

district in the nation, and led the globe-spanning federal agency that administers the largest immigration system in the world. I have realigned institutions, built and maintained partnerships, charted new directions, and imposed fiscal discipline and restraint. I have accomplished this and more with my phenomenal colleagues throughout my nearly sixteen years of public service.

I hope I have the privilege of future accomplishments with the oversight of this Committee. I believe in the Department's accountability to you, and if I have the honor of being confirmed to be the next Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, I will work closely with you to help lead and manage the Department in a manner and with personal qualities that bring pride to this Committee and earn the respect and admiration of the public whom you represent.

I have been honored to serve the United States of America. This country has given my family and me our freedom and liberty, and precious opportunities.

It is a privilege to appear before you. Thank you for the opportunity.