

Opening Statement of Donald B. Verrilli, Jr.
March 30, 2011

Thank you, Senator Whitehouse. Thank you, Senator Blumenthal for your generous introduction

The principal feeling I have today is one of intense gratitude.

I want first to express my gratitude to my wife, Gail Laster, for her love and support. Gail is a wonderful mother to our daughter Jordan, who begins her spring term as a freshman at Dartmouth this week, and at the same time Gail has achieved such great distinction in her career as a lawyer and public servant. I am also grateful that I can share this day with my parents. They could not be here in person, but I am pretty sure they are watching on c-span, and I want to take this opportunity to thank them for teaching me, through the example of their own lives, the paramount importance of dedication, integrity, and decency, and the lesson that so much more can be accomplished by bringing people together than by dividing them.

Finally, I want to express my profound gratitude to the President for the confidence he has shown in me by nominating me, to the Attorney General for his strong support, and to the Members of this Committee for holding this hearing and considering my nomination. I believe that it is our Constitution and our enduring faith in the rule of law that make this a truly exceptional nation. So I can think of no greater honor, and no more solemn responsibility, than to represent the United States before the Supreme Court – to participate every day in reaffirming our nation's commitment to equal justice under law. And I can think of no more fulfilling professional experience than working with the extraordinary lawyers in the Solicitor General's office, which many have rightly described as the finest law firm in America.

The position of Solicitor General is unique in that the office serves all three branches of government. Of course, the Solicitor General reports to the Attorney General and ultimately to the President as an executive officer assisting in the discharge of the President's constitutional responsibility faithfully to execute the laws. But the Solicitor General also has special obligations to the Congress, and will (in all but the rarest cases) vigorously defend its statutes when their constitutionality is challenged. And the Solicitor General is, in a very special sense, an officer of the Supreme Court. The Court rightly expects that the Solicitor General will be scrupulous in respecting the principle of *stare decisis*, will exercise discretion wisely in making claims on the Court's limited resources, and will insist on the highest standards of candor and professionalism in every representation made to the Court. Because of these multiple responsibilities, by long tradition, the Solicitor General has appropriately been afforded a large degree of independence.

If I am confirmed, I will do everything in my power to live up to the extraordinary example of professionalism, independence and integrity set by Rex Lee, Seth Waxman, Ted Olson and the other Solicitors General who have served with such distinction during my career as a lawyer, as well as their many illustrious predecessors. I understand that this is what our commitment to the rule of law requires, and I am humbled by the prospect of continuing the traditions of the Office. I look forward to the Committee's questions. Thank you.