

Opening Statement of Virginia A. Seitz
March 30, 2011

Thank you, Senator Whitehouse. I appreciate the chance to introduce my family, starting with my husband, Roy McLeese – a federal prosecutor, a 25-year veteran of the Department of Justice, and the best imaginable husband, father, friend and lawyer. My son, Roy, a 10th grader at Field School, representing his sister Miranda, who is at the University of Chicago. My brother Collins Seitz, Jr., representing my other brothers Mark and Stephen from Tennessee and Colorado. And my niece Meredith, representing many nieces and nephews. Finally, our dear friend, David Fein, the US Attorney from CT, and his wife Liz.

I would like to start with some thank-yous:

To President Obama for the honor of this nomination,

To this committee for its consideration,

To Senators Coons and Carper for their kind introductions,

To the two great law firms where I've practiced, Bredhoff & Kaiser and Sidley Austin, and my friends there,

To those who were mentors and inspirations, particularly Judge Harry Edwards, Justice Brennan, Julia Penny Clark, Peter Keisler, Carter Phillips and Joe Guerra,

And, finally, to my absent parents whom I wish were here today.

Most of us feel our parents' influence profoundly, and I am no exception. My mother was a school teacher. I started my professional life as a teacher. My father was an esteemed judge, and I followed him into the law. The Office of Legal Counsel is tasked with providing the Executive Branch with candid, independent and principled advice based on the best understanding of what the law requires. I spent a good part of my life watching my father put aside personal views and engage in independent, principled legal analysis in cases large and small, in state and federal courts.

As has been mentioned here, my father was the judge who ordered the desegregation of the University of Delaware and public elementary and secondary schools in Delaware. Recognizing that he was bound by the Supreme Court's separate-but-equal decision, he politely questioned its reasoning, but decided only the question of whether the separate schools were equal, found they were not, and ordered the immediate admission of African-American students into the vastly superior white schools. At the time, his decisions were extraordinary and courageous – no judge had previously ordered an African-American student admitted to a white elementary or secondary school.

From conversations with him over the years, I know he never considered ruling otherwise. He believed that the rigorous application of legal principles required the result he reached, and he was passionate about the faithful application of the law. For my father, the foundation of our just and free society was the rule of law.

If I am confirmed, I will do my best to follow in his footsteps. I can make no deeper personal commitment. Thank you for considering my nomination.