

Statement of Ronald H. Weich
Senate Committee on the Judiciary

April 1, 2009

Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Specter and members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in connection with my nomination to be the Assistant Attorney General for Legislative Affairs. It is a special honor for me to appear before this Senate Committee with which I have worked closely for many years.

I am grateful to President Obama for nominating me to this important position. If my nomination is reported favorably by this committee and confirmed by the full Senate, I will work hard every day to justify the confidence that the President, Attorney General Holder and you have shown in me.

I am proud to be accompanied today by members of my family: my wife Julie Stewart, my daughters Sophie and Sara, and my parents Robert and Cecile Weich. Their love and support over many years makes me whole, and allows me to be here today.

Senator Reid was kind to introduce me to you, and I am grateful to him for that. But in fact, I owe a debt of gratitude to each of the three Senators for whom I have worked. Each has taught me something important that I would put to use if confirmed to head the Legislative Affairs Office in the Justice Department.

From Senator Specter, who gave me my first job in the Senate 20 years ago, I learned the importance of rigorous legal and factual analysis. He and I share a background as state prosecutors in large cities, where the practice can be a bit rough and ready. But I learned from Senator Specter that when you're writing federal law, every word counts and you'd better get it right.

From Senator Kennedy, I learned the value of bipartisan compromise. He is always guided by a set of unwavering ideals, but he is never afraid to find common ground with those who hold different ideals. That philosophy has led Senator Kennedy to partner with many of the Republican members of this committee and other Republicans over the years to pass so many landmark laws, and it is why he has earned the respect and affection of all of his colleagues.

And from Senator Reid, I have learned to revere the legislative branch – and especially the Senate. Senator Reid, like his mentor Senator Byrd, is known to pull a worn copy of the Constitution from his breast pocket and remind everyone that Congress does not work for the President. It is a co-equal branch of our tripartite federal system, and it is described in Article I of the Constitution because it is the branch closest to the people.

Each of these three lessons would inform my work if I am confirmed as an Assistant Attorney General. I would approach the job with intellectual discipline, always striving to get the law, the facts and the policy right. I would endeavor to work closely with all members of this committee, Republicans and Democrats, because I know that in the effort to keep the American people safe and protect their rights, there is much more that unites us than divides us. And I would always respect the role and the prerogatives of Congress.

I have spent about half of my professional life working for the Senate. For the last few years, I have been privileged to have an office in the United States Capitol, just steps from the Senate floor, with a view of the Supreme Court and the Library of Congress. Every single day I come to work, I marvel at the genius of the Framers in establishing our time-honored system of government in which Congress makes the laws, the President executes the laws, and the judiciary interprets the laws.

Our Constitution establishes a natural tension among the three branches. But that tension need not breed animosity if leaders in the respective branches respect and trust each other, and communicate productively. In particular, a healthy relationship between the Justice Department and this Committee is crucial to the success of federal law enforcement.

If confirmed as the Assistant Attorney General for Legislative Affairs, I will do my small part to strengthen that relationship and help the Justice Department function effectively for the benefit of the American people.