

Testimony of
The Honorable Orrin Hatch

July 23, 2003

Statement of Chairman Orrin G. Hatch

Before the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary

Hearing on the Nominations of

R. Alexander Acosta to be Assistant Attorney General,
Civil Rights Division, United States Department of Justice

And

Daniel J. Bryant to be Assistant Attorney General,
Office of Legal Policy, United States Department of Justice

I would like to welcome before the Committee this afternoon two outstanding nominees for important posts at the Department of Justice. Before we hear from their home state senators, let me say a few words about each nominee.

Alex Acosta has been nominated to serve as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. In this capacity, he will lead the enforcement of federal statutes prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, sex, handicap, religion, and national origin. Of course, Mr. Acosta is already familiar with the responsibilities this position entails since he served in the Civil Rights Division in 2001 as a Deputy Assistant Attorney General, and then as the Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General. He has also taught civil rights law as a professor at George Mason Law School. He is widely recognized as an expert in the civil rights arena, and I have no doubt he will serve the Justice Department and the country with distinction upon his confirmation.

I am not alone in my endorsement of Mr. Acosta. He has received accolades from a host of civil rights organizations who extol his many contributions. For example, the Arab-American Institute stated:

"At one of the most difficult times in our nation, Alex reached out to the Arab and Muslim Americans to ensure that we were part of the system and that our rights were protected. His immediate response to our community's concerns provided an important indication of his sensitivity and helped pave the way for regular meetings with various branches of the Department of Justice."

Similarly, the National Council of La Raza has stated, "Mr. Acosta has proven himself to be a bridge-builder, not only with the Latino community but with other ethnic and racial groups." The truth of this statement is reflected by the diversity of groups that have supported him, including the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, the American Association of People with Disabilities, and the National Fraternal Order of Police, as well as various labor organizations. In fact, Mr. Acosta's accomplishments are so impressive that he recently received the "Excellence in Government" Award from the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

Mr. Acosta attended Harvard College and Harvard Law School and clerked for Judge Samuel Alito on the Third Circuit. He has worked as an appellate attorney at Kirkland and Ellis, and as Project Director at the Ethics and Public Policy Center. Most recently, he has been serving as a Board Member on the National Labor Relations Board.

Given Mr. Acosta's extensive experience, I am confident that he is well-equipped to handle the challenges of this critical post. I am hopeful that this Committee and the Senate as a whole will move quickly to confirm him.

We will also consider this afternoon the nomination of Dan Bryant to be Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Policy. This position plays a crucial role in planning, developing, and coordinating implementation of major policy initiatives of high priority to the Justice Department and to the Administration. The Office of Legal Policy also provides important legal advice and assistance to the Attorney General and to department components.

Mr. Bryant comes before the Committee with an impressive track record of public service. He was unanimously confirmed in 2001 as Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legislative Affairs, where he was responsible for devising and implementing the Justice Department's

legislative strategy and coordinating all congressional oversight of the Department. Mr. Bryant performed these duties impeccably and has earned the trust and respect of many Senators in the process.

Even before he assumed his leadership role at the Department's Office of Legislative Affairs, Mr. Bryant was no stranger to Capitol Hill. Prior to joining the Justice Department he served as Chief Counsel of the Crime Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee. He also served on the staff of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.

Mr. Bryant's experience in Congress, along with his significant experience at the Justice Department, makes him an ideal choice to take the helm at the Office of Legal Policy.

Let me close by again expressing my pleasure in having such well qualified nominees before us today. I look forward to hearing their testimony.

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