

Testimony of
Mr. James Castro-Blanco

October 1, 2003

United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary
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Re: Judicial Nomination of Dora L. Irizarry

Chairman Hatch, and members of the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary, thank you for giving me this opportunity to offer testimony supporting the nomination of Judge Dora L. Irizarry to the position of United States District Court Judge for the Eastern District of New York. My recommendation is based upon my own experiences working with Judge Irizarry as well as numerous conversations I have had with many members of the legal community. As a former Assistant United States Attorney in the Eastern District of New York, I have had the opportunity to practice before some of the most outstanding jurists in the nation. Judge Irizarry would be an excellent addition to that Court. Her wisdom, compassion, integrity and love of the law will enable her to be an extraordinary District Court Judge. I am confident that she will serve with distinction.

I have the honor to serve on the New York City Mayor's Advisory Committee on the Judiciary. In that role, I have reviewed many judicial applications and interviewed many candidates. The most important qualities I look for in a candidate are integrity, proper judicial demeanor, knowledge of the law and a sense of compassion. Judge Irizarry possesses all these qualities in abundance.

During my tenure as President of the Puerto Rican Bar Association, I worked extensively with Judge Irizarry to increase opportunities for Hispanic attorneys and to provide scholarship money for Hispanic law students. Her efforts in this regard have been recognized by the Hispanic legal and business communities. Her honors and awards, while too numerous to list, evidence her service to her community and the esteem in which she is held.

Earlier this year, the Board of Directors of the Puerto Rican Bar Association voted to approve Judge Irizarry's nomination to the District Court. That decision was based upon the Board's review of Judge Irizarry's record and reputation. Additionally, prior to the vote, members of the Board who have appeared before Judge Irizarry discussed the Judge's ability to effectively and respectfully run her courtroom. The Board agreed that she possesses the intellect and judicial demeanor to be an outstanding District Court Judge.

My practice as a trial lawyer has been conducted solely in the federal courts. As a result, I have not had the opportunity to appear before Judge Irizarry. My interactions with Judge Irizarry have taken place through many community service related activities. Judge Irizarry and I have served as panelists at law school forums. We have been speakers at Bar Association functions and we have worked closely organizing events honoring prominent individuals who have made a positive impact on our community.

I have observed Judge Irizarry interact with many individuals in a variety of forums. Some of those individuals have challenged her views on a variety of issues in a confrontational manner. She has always maintained her poise in such situations and treated people respectfully even when that courtesy was not returned. In my opinion, her demeanor on all occasions during which I have observed her has been professional and measured.

Judge Irizarry's career epitomizes the American dream. From her humble beginnings in Puerto Rico and the projects of the South Bronx, using her intellect and perseverance, she graduated from Yale University and Columbia University School of Law. Forsaking a highly paid Wall Street career, she served as an Assistant District Attorney and then as a Judge of the New York City Criminal Court and New York State Court of Claims. During her career as a public servant, she continued to be a community leader, mentor and role model.

Judge Irizarry's generosity of spirit and fine character are apparent from her interactions with all people whom she encounters. Her reputation among practitioners is that of a fair and no-nonsense judge. She has led the kind of multi-dimensional life that will allow her to mete out justice in a thoughtful and fair way. It is my belief that Dora L. Irizarry possesses all the qualities necessary to be an extraordinary District Court Judge. In short, her judgment, intellect and character set her apart. I am honored to have been given the opportunity to speak in support of Judge Irizarry's nomination.

Thank You