

Statement of

The Honorable Orrin Hatch

United States Senator
Utah
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Before the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary
Hearing on the nomination of
Judge Alberto Gonzales
For Attorney General of the United States

I believe that President Bush has submitted a strong nominee for the position of Attorney General of the United States.

I want to join Senators Specter and Leahy in welcoming Judge Gonzales to the Committee today.

I know that this is a very proud day for Judge Gonzales' family and I welcome his family to our hearing this morning. While his father, Pablo, did not live long enough to see his son receive the honor of this important nomination, I can not help but think that he is here in spirit today.

The position of Attorney General - our nation's highest law enforcement official - requires a person with a deep commitment to the principle of equal justice under the law.

I have worked closely with Judge Gonzales for four years.

I know from my first-hand experiences with Judge Gonzales that he believes in the principle of equal justice for all. I know that he has the ability to make an outstanding Attorney General for all of the citizens of the United States.

His career has been an American success story. Judge Gonzales has already had a distinguished career as an attorney, judge, and civil servant. He has made much of the opportunities that were in part created by his education at Harvard Law School, Rice University and the Air Force Academy.

I think that his background experiences will enable him to bring an important perspective to the administration of justice in the United States.

I stand ready to work with Judge Gonzales to help him succeed in carrying out his new responsibilities. The American public will be counting on him to help see that Justice is fair for all in America.

I see eye to eye with Judge Gonzales on many of the issues. But from time to time we have had our disagreements. Whether we have agreed, or disagreed, on a particular matter, I have always respected the forthright manner in which he has been willing to discuss the issues with me.

Judge Gonzales will be asked some tough questions today. This is how it should be.

For example, today's hearing will continue the on-going public policy debate on how a democratic society with a long tradition of protecting civil liberties should conduct itself when it finds itself threatened and attacked by terrorist groups and individuals who will stop at literally nothing to destroy our way of life.

It is my hope that in addition to providing an adequate record about Judge Gonzales' qualifications to serve as Attorney General, one of the outcomes of today's hearing will be to help educate the Committee and the public about the facts of what actions were taken, and were not taken, with respect to the treatment and interrogation of the various classes of individuals who have been detained and taken into custody by the United States as part of our response to the horrific 9/11 attacks on America.

I am confident that Judge Gonzales will attempt to fully and fairly answer our inquiries today. I also believe that he will continue to consult with us on a constructive basis throughout his tenure as Attorney General.

Let me just say to Judge Gonzales that he has a big job ahead but I believe he is up to the task.

Before I ask Judge Gonzales some questions, I want to take this opportunity to once again recognize the hard work, dedication, and many accomplishments of our current Attorney General, John Ashcroft.

Frankly, it has not been lost on me that many of those who are opposing Judge Gonzales today are the very same groups that attempted to unfairly vilify Attorney General Ashcroft for the last four years.