

Testimony of
The Honorable R. Gil Kerlikowske

April 1, 2009

STATEMENT OF R. GIL KERLIKOWSKE
NOMINEE TO BE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
OF THE
UNITED STATES SENATE
APRIL 1, 2009

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Specter, and Members of the Committee, it is a great honor and privilege to be sitting before you today as the nominee for Director of National Drug Control Policy. I am deeply humbled by President Obama's request that I serve in a position of such importance. I wish to thank the members of the Committee and your staffs for providing me with the opportunity to meet with many of you over the past few weeks. Each of these meetings has been productive and informative, and if confirmed, I look forward to our forming closer relationships and engaging in richer discussions about the future course of the nation's drug control strategies.

I want to specifically thank Senator Murray and Senator Cantwell for their support today. As Chief of Police in Seattle, I relied on their assistance and leadership in helping me reduce crime rates in that city to record lows. I also want to thank my wife, Anna Laszlo, who is here with me today. She has supported my commitment to public service these many years. Additionally, while they are not here today, I must acknowledge the support of both my mother, Norma Shands, and of Anna's mother, Eva Laszlo. Anna and I, both only children, are deeply grateful to these two women for their commitment to us over the course of our lives and careers. I would also be remiss if I did not recognize Judge Thomas W. Shands, my step-father, who has since passed but would be very proud to see me appearing before you today. He was an inspiration to me while growing up as an individual who could hand down stiff sentences when necessary but also was in the forefront of campaigning for modern treatment for incarcerated juveniles.

I would also like to thank the many organizations and individuals who have offered their support for my nomination. I look forward to conducting expansive and open dialogue with all stakeholders as I develop a powerful and effective national drug strategy.

I have proudly spent the past 36 years of my life in law enforcement and public service. It has been my privilege to lead two of this country's largest police departments over a period of thirteen years. In my current role as the Chief of Police in Seattle, where I have led for nearly nine years, I have brought innovative solutions to the problems of drugs and crime, and their effect on society. A key element in my approach while in Seattle has involved enlisting the support of the entire community to reduce crime. While this approach is commonly referred to as, "community policing", I prefer it be recognized as "policing". The transparency and

collaborative approach of this concept has ultimately led to the lowest drug use and serious crime rates in Seattle since 1967. My goal is to use similar principles in the development, articulation, and implementation of an effective, comprehensive, and coordinated national drug control strategy.

Let me assure you that I know President Obama is committed to developing and implementing a rigorous drug control agenda, while bringing ONDCP back to its original leadership position. I am also grateful for the strong support of Vice President Biden. Our Vice President has long been a leader in protecting communities and families from the harms of illegal drugs. His continued dedication to solving the drug problem will be a key resource for ONDCP's success.

Upon confirmation, I will immediately coordinate with my colleagues in the federal government, as well as our counterparts at the state and local level, to ensure that the national drug control strategy is:

- ? Balanced and comprehensive, based upon the best possible understanding of the drug threat, and incorporates a science-based approach to public policy;
- ? Vigorously implemented through development of a national drug budget that contains proven, effective programs; and
- ? Rigorously assessed and adapted to changing circumstances,

Essential to these efforts is restoration of the vitality of the Office of National Drug Control Policy by recommitting the agency to its policy leadership mission. ONDCP was created by the Congress--under the guidance of this Committee--to focus this nation's efforts toward solving the drug problem by developing and implementing a balanced, comprehensive national drug control strategy. ONDCP will effectively build consensus on how best to use interdiction efforts, law enforcement, treatment, prevention, and sound research to achieve measurable results in reducing drug use and its consequences. Dialogue will be continuous. Debate will be inclusive of disparate ideas. Deliberation will be comprehensive and collaborative.

I will work diligently to ensure that our efforts are supported by a properly balanced federal drug control budget--one which logically implements research-based programs to support and implement that Strategy. There will be a renewed focus on evidence-based approaches to reduce demand for drugs, through prevention as well as treatment. Additionally, we must also work to create strong partnerships to reduce the overall impact of drug trafficking and use.

Increased cooperation with the international community must also be included in any comprehensive strategy. Our nation's demand for drugs often fuels drug production and trafficking, as well as violence and corruption, within other nations. Domestic drug use directly funds the terrible drug-related crime currently wracking Mexico and fuels illegal armed groups in Colombia. Our international drug control programs help strengthen law enforcement and judicial institutions, while providing alternative livelihoods for poor farmers.

While these international supply reduction programs play a vital role in improving security, supporting the rule of law, and denying terrorist and criminal safe havens around the world, the greatest contribution we can make toward stability would be to reduce our demand for illicit drugs.

Finally, under the assumption that if you can't measure it, you can't improve it, I will set a goal for the development of a strong, transparent monitoring system. While highly complex, performance evaluation of the national drug strategy is key to both validating and tracking the efficacy of the strategic goals and objectives established by the National Drug Control Strategy and the individual programs which are funded to support it. With a robust monitoring system in place, we will know better how to respond to the ever-changing international drug situation and will have the information required to guide the mission-essential coordination and collaboration efforts of the office. We will be better able to report on our progress, justify the level of funding requested, and satisfy the interest of the citizens of this nation that their money is being well-spent and that their needs for a safer and more secure environment are being met.

I want to thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. It would indeed be an honor to serve this nation in its effort to reduce drug use and the problems it creates for every American and the international community. I look forward to answering any questions the Committee may have.