

Statement of

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein

United States Senator
California
November 17, 2010

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Introduction of Michele Marie Leonhart
Nominee for
Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration
Nominations Hearing, U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am very pleased to introduce Michele Leonhart who has been nominated to serve as the Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

Ms. Leonhart's distinguished career with the DEA includes several critical roles in my home state of California. In 1997, she became the first woman to head a DEA field division when she was named Special Agent in Charge for San Francisco.

She managed DEA operations in San Francisco until September 1998, when she became the Special Agent in Charge of the Los Angeles Field Division; one of the DEA's largest. She continued in that position until March 2004, when she was confirmed as Deputy Administrator.

She and her family continue to maintain a residence in California, and we are proud to call her one of our own.

Ms. Leonhart has served as the Acting Administrator for the DEA since November 2007, and was unanimously confirmed by the Senate to be the Deputy Administrator in 2004, so the Members of this Committee are already familiar with her outstanding qualifications and excellent work in enforcing the nation's controlled substances laws.

But I would like to briefly highlight some of Ms. Leonhart's most notable accomplishments.

Under her leadership, the DEA has reached record-breaking levels of extraditions, drug and asset seizures, and revenue denied to drug trafficking organizations. She realigned resources to expand the DEA's foreign presence to combat emerging threats, and enhanced intelligence sharing with foreign countries to include Mexico and Colombia.

Ms. Leonhart also implemented a plan to deploy the first team of DEA agents to conduct counter-narcotics operations in Afghanistan post-911, leading to the investigation and prosecution of Afghan drug lords.

Under her leadership as Acting Administrator, the DEA recently completed one of the most successful joint international drug operations in history - Operation Xcellerator. That 21-month effort, terminating in February 2009, dealt a severe blow to the violent Sinaloa cartel in Mexico, resulting in more than 750 arrests and \$59 million seized.

Ms. Leonhart has also worked with law enforcement, community and school leaders, to educate children, parents and teachers about drug prevention. She explained the importance of these efforts at the 18th Annual Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) conference when she said: "Every child you get through to . . . is one less member of a dealer's customer base."

Over the years, Ms. Leonhart has received numerous honors for her achievements, including awards for meritorious service from both President Clinton and President Bush.

There are, and will continue to be, many serious challenges confronting the DEA, as violent drug trafficking organizations and gangs continue to threaten not just our nation, but countries around the world. And the DEA needs a leader who has the talent, experience, and commitment to fight these ruthless criminals.

With her nearly 30 years of dedicated service and longstanding record of success, Acting Administrator Leonhart will continue to provide strong leadership as the DEA fulfills its vital mission, and I urge my colleagues to support her nomination.