

Hearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary

Lisa Oudens Monaco
Nominee for Deputy Attorney General
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Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley, and members of the Judiciary Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the Deputy Attorney General. And I thank Senator Markey for his kind introduction.

Without the love and support of my family, I would not have been able to pursue a career in public service. I am joined today by my brother Mark and his wife Jennifer. I am grateful for their presence and for the support of their children, Nicholas and Sophia, as well as my twin brother Chris, his wife Lisa, my nieces Jessica and Julia, and my brother Peter and his partner Nancy.

When I last came before this Committee as a nominee 10 years ago, my mother and father were sitting behind me. My mother is no longer with us, but my father is riveted to the TV this morning. I am deeply grateful to my parents, who taught me about hard work, humility, and what it means to live one's values.

If confirmed, I would be honored to work with the leadership team nominated by the President; with Merrick Garland, and Vanita Gupta, another veteran of the Department, with whom I am pleased to be here today.

The Deputy Attorney General is responsible for running the day-to-day operations of the Department of Justice. Its 115,000 employees—across the Department and its law enforcement agencies—work every day to uphold the rule of law, protect the American people from domestic and foreign threats, and to pursue equal justice under law. If I am confirmed, I will dedicate myself to protecting our national security, ensuring that the laws of our country are fairly and faithfully enforced, independent of partisan influence, and that the rights of all Americans are protected.

I grew up as a lawyer in the Department, serving in different positions over 15 years, across Republican and Democratic Administrations. Each role reinforced for me that with tremendous power comes profound responsibility to protect the rights and liberties that we are all guaranteed by the Constitution. And it is only if we commit ourselves every day to that effort that we can earn the confidence of the American people.

Early in my career, as an Assistant United States Attorney, I felt the responsibility to ensure not that cases are won, but that justice is done, and that each individual defendant's rights are protected.

As a senior official in the FBI after 9/11, I helped transform that agency into a national security organization focused on preventing the next attack.

And, as the leader of the National Security Division, I enhanced the Department's ability to grapple with what was then a newly emerging threat—nation state cyber attackers.

Because of these experiences, I understand that the Justice Department holds a unique place in our government; it wears two hats: It is an executive agency that implements the President's lawful policy objectives. That's policy objectives, not political objectives. It is also an independent investigator and prosecutor, and, in this function, must act free from any political or partisan influence. Throughout my career, these norms have been my North Star.

Today, the Justice Department is at an inflection point. Never has the Department's role in protecting our national security and the safety of the American people been more important, as we battle violent extremism—foreign and domestic—and mounting cyber threats from nation states and criminals alike. Our response to the shocking events of January 6th, an attack that cut to our country's core, and I know so personally affected many in this room, is nothing less than the defense of our democracy.

We must renew our work with law enforcement to protect public safety and build community trust, even as a once-in-a-century pandemic makes a difficult job all the more dangerous for our frontline officers.

We must recommit ourselves to the promise of equal justice, and confront the fact that communities of color and other minorities continue to face discrimination in fundamental aspects of American life—including in the criminal justice system.

My first job in the Department was as counsel to Janet Reno, the first woman Attorney General. She hung a portrait of Attorney General Edward Levi in her conference room. It signaled her commitment to continuing Levi's post-Watergate work to ensure the Department's independence. It symbolized for me then, and is a reminder today, that the Department's leaders have a duty to remember and reaffirm the values of the institution.

When Attorney General Levi was asked what he thought the Department needed most after Watergate, he responded, "A soul." I believe that the soul of the Justice Department lives in the integrity of the women and men who serve it; the career professionals and the norms that are the connective tissue keeping our rule-of-law muscles strong.

I have already had the great good fortune to work with nearly every part of the Department. I know that its career lawyers, law enforcement agents, analysts, and professional staff are its beating heart.

If confirmed, it will be my honor to once again work alongside them.

Thank you. I look forward to answering the Committee's questions.