

Testimony of
Alejandro Mayorkas

June 24, 2009

Statement of Alejandro Nicholas Mayorkas
To the Judiciary Committee of the United States Senate

Today, I have the extraordinary honor of being before the Senate Judiciary Committee as President Obama's nominee to head the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). It is a privilege, and I humbly thank you for considering my nomination.

Thank you, Senator Feinstein, for your kind words of introduction. I am grateful you are here on what I hope will be my return to public service. As you know, I am very grateful for the opportunity I had to serve as an Assistant United States Attorney and then the United States Attorney for the Central District of California. It has always been a source of great pride that you, Senator Feinstein, recommended me to the President to serve as the United States Attorney. Those extraordinary years were formative and formidable ones, and I thank you for your confidence in me then, and again now.

I have many people to thank today. Many parents wish for their children a better life than the one they themselves have had. This is an aspiration difficult to even define for me. My father and mother sacrificed much to create for me a childhood and a path to accomplishment bounded only by my own performance. Unfortunately, my father was not well enough to travel here today. But my parents filled my life with three terrific siblings, my sister Cathy, and my younger brothers James and Anthony, both of whom are here today. I am also blessed to have the support of three wonderful women - my wife Tanya, my almost-nine-year-old daughter Giselle, and my four year-old daughter Amelia.

Lastly, I would like to thank my mother. I am sometimes asked why I work so hard. With any small good I achieve, if I do some small thing that makes life better for someone else, then I believe those around me will have met a little bit of my mother. A better soul and a warmer heart there could never be.

If this Committee and the Senate find me deserving of confirmation, I pledge my every effort to ensure that USCIS fulfills its mission with energy and focus. Key to this is ensuring clarity of mission, pursuing robust communication and outreach with Congress and stakeholders, anticipating and planning for future demands, and motivating and retaining personnel.

As you know, I previously had the honor to lead the United States Attorney's Office for the Central District of California, an office of 245 Assistant United States Attorneys responsible for the largest federal judicial district in the nation, comprised of approximately 180 cities with an aggregate population of 18 million people. I know what it takes and what it means to lead and what can be accomplished when the dedicated men and women of a federal agency are motivated to do their very best in the service of our country. From my nearly twelve years as a federal

prosecutor, I learned what it means to enforce the law and to do so in furtherance of our national security and the public safety.

If I am confirmed I will conduct an overall review of the Agency. As a nominee, I have had an opportunity to engage with officials in USCIS and to begin, in my own mind, the task of outlining priorities.

First, clarity of mission is critical in enhancing the public profile of the Agency and instilling public confidence in the secure, fair, and effective administration of our nation's immigration laws. I am committed to ensuring USCIS delivers high-quality customer service to those who are eligible to receive benefits. Protecting our national security and public safety is a critical component of the USCIS mission, not an after-thought. This means we must continue to strive to improve the Agency's fraud prevention and detection operations, increase collaboration with US Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other law enforcement agencies to respond to fraud, and improve the efficiency and accuracy of the E-Verify system.

Second, I believe it is critical to enhance transparency and improve the flow of information from the Agency to Congress and the appropriate stakeholders to ensure those concerned about particular issues understand USCIS actions and are able to enact effective immigration regulations and laws. I hope to build an effective relationship with this Committee, both members and your staffs, and to understand your priorities. I know this confirmation process is just the start. I also hope that, if I am confirmed and after I have completed an Agency review, you will be willing to hear from me about the needs of USCIS.

Third, we must always look to the future. It is critical to position USCIS to meet current and future immigration demands. To this end, we must ensure the successful progress and implementation of Business Transformation, increase the efficiency of domestic and international operations, and improve detection and prevention of system abuse.

Fourth, developing a motivated workforce is important to ensure high-quality service and retaining such a workforce is always a challenge. If I am confirmed, I commit to doing my very best to review the needs of the USCIS workforce and to implement programs and policies that serve to motivate and retain employees.

As one who was granted citizenship through the beneficence of our government and by virtue of my family's journey to this country, I understand deeply the gravity as well as the nobility of the mission to administer our immigration laws efficiently and with fairness, honesty, and integrity. The most important responsibility of USCIS is its authority to bestow citizenship. As a naturalized citizen, I have a deep understanding and appreciation of this mission.

My parents, sister, and I were once refugees. In 1960, we fled Cuba. My father lost the country of his birth, and my mother, for the second time in her young life, was forced to flee a country she considered home. But our flight to security gave us the gift of this wonderful new homeland. I know how very fortunate I am.

I am honored to be before you today. I am deeply humbled the President nominated me to be the Director of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. Thank you for your

consideration.

Alejandro Nicholas Mayorkas