

Testimony of
Thomas Perelli

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STATEMENT OF THOMAS J. PERRELLI
NOMINEE FOR ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Mr. Chairman, Senator Specter, and Members of the Committee, thank you for giving me this opportunity to appear before the Committee as nominee for the position of Associate Attorney General. I am grateful to the President and the Attorney General for giving me the opportunity to be considered for this post and to serve again in the Department of Justice, an organization that I revere.

I would like to thank the Members of the Committee and their staffs who have met with me to start what I hope will be a dialog about the issues facing the country and the Department of Justice. There is deep knowledge in this Committee about the many challenges ahead, and I hope that I have the opportunity to work with you to overcome them.

Finally, I would like to thank Senators Webb and Warner for the statements of support they have submitted for the record. As a lifelong Virginian, I greatly appreciate and respect their leadership and service to the Commonwealth.

I would not be here today without the love of my family and a great deal of good fortune. I want to thank first the love of my life, my wife Kristine for all of her love, help, and support -- especially now with a new baby arriving any day. She is here with our wonderful, albeit fidgety son, James Francis.

I also want to thank my mother, Nancy Perelli, who has been an inspiration to me for many reasons, not the least of which is all that I learned by watching her, as a single parent, work full days, take care of me and my sister, and go to law school at night. She is here with my aunt Lucy Wolcott from Barre, Vermont. Lucy recently celebrated her 90th birthday and is the rock of our family.

I also want to thank my sister, Caryn and her husband Scott, for supporting me and our family, and Scott's brothers, Lieutenant Matthew Trivett of the Montgomery County, Maryland Fire Marshall Bomb Squad and Sergeant David Trivett of the Baltimore County Police Department's homicide unit. I also want to thank my brother-in-law Kevin Lucius, who made the trip from Madison, Wisconsin to be here today.

Missing from this group behind me is my father, also Tom Perelli. He passed away in 2002 after a long struggle with cancer. I think of him today because my father was one of the career professionals who are the heart of the Department of Justice. He made his career there and it was central to his being; indeed, he refused to retire until a day or two before he died -- it was a part of what defined him.

My own reverence for the Department of Justice began through my father. As a college student, I worked summers at the Immigration & Naturalization Service, then part of DOJ. I began working primarily on IT projects, but I had the chance to work briefly in an office that focused on Cuba policy, worked on brainstorming ideas for how to use Ellis Island, and got to visit the men and women on the border in San Diego to learn more about the extraordinary challenges that they face and the remarkable job that they do. In my time as a summer intern, I also had the unusual opportunity to talk with then Attorney General Meese, who stopped to talk to me when he was exiting the building and I was waiting at the bus stop for a DOJ shuttle.

When I completed law school, I clerked for the Honorable Royce Lamberth of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia -- himself a lifelong public servant and veteran of the Judge Advocate General's Corps and the U.S. Attorney's Office in D.C. In that job, I saw the best of government lawyers, prosecuting cases from Iran-Contra to drug gangs and defending the United States in cases from the savings and loan crisis to environmental regulation of nuclear power plants.

All of those early experiences left me with a deep appreciation for the Department -- its mission and the extraordinary people who carry it out. That appreciation increased exponentially later in my career when I served first as Counsel to the Attorney General and later as Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Division. The men and women who serve in the Department from administration to administration, from the law enforcement agents of the FBI, DEA, and ATF who put their lives on the line every day, to lawyers and staff whose sole goal is fairness, evenhanded application of the law, and zealous representation of the United States, are remarkable and deserve more praise than they ever receive.

I am honored to have been nominated to serve as Associate Attorney General and to have the opportunity to work again among the career professionals at the Department. But I have no illusions about the size of the task. The challenges that the Department of Justice faces today are enormous. Its challenges derive from its mission, which has expanded greatly since September 11, 2001, from the constraints on its resources, which have limited its ability, and from management and other problems that are to a large extent self-inflicted.

My vision is a Justice Department of which all Americans can be proud -- a Department that keeps America safe from threats foreign and domestic, a Department that at every level makes the evenhanded application of the law and the representation of the interests of the United States without regard to party or personal views its priority; a Department that works in partnership with state, local, and tribal authorities to most efficiently protect the public and make communities safe; a Department that is transparent and gives to the American public confidence that the rule of law and the Constitution are paramount; and a Department that works with this Committee and others in government to collaborate on the many challenges ahead.

I look forward to answering your questions.