

Testimony of
Tony West

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STATEMENT OF TONY WEST NOMINEE FOR ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL FOR
THE CIVIL DIVISION UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE: I am deeply honored to appear before you this afternoon as the nominee to serve as Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Division of the United States Department of Justice. I am grateful to the President and the Attorney General for their confidence in me and for giving me the opportunity to return to the Department of Justice where I spent nearly half of my legal career as an advocate on behalf of the United States. I am thankful to you, Mr. Chairman, and to this Committee for holding this hearing and considering my qualifications for this important post.

If I may, I would like to introduce the members of my family who are here today. Were it not for the unconditional love and support of my family and the grace of God, I would not be before you today. I want to introduce first my law school classmate, my best friend and the love of my life, my wife, Maya Harris West. An extraordinary woman of accomplishment in the law, policy and philanthropy, Maya has been as much my teacher as she has been my partner, and everyday she is in my life is a blessing.

I want to thank our brilliant daughter, Meena, who will begin a new adventure this fall as a first-year student at Harvard Law School. We are so proud of her.

I also want to thank my mother, Peggy, and my father, Franklin, who have been an inspiration to me all of my life. While I may not have always succeeded, I have always tried to live up to the examples of strength, compassion, wisdom and integrity that my parents set for my sisters and me every day of our lives.

My gratitude also goes to my sister-in-law, Kamala, who has dedicated her life to public service as the elected district attorney of San Francisco. My life is enriched because of her love, support and confidence in me.

I also want to thank and recognize three people who could not be here today: my two younger sisters, Pamela and Patricia, who keep me grounded with the loving bonds of affection that only close siblings can know; and my mother-in-law, Dr. Shyamala Harris, who four weeks ago tomorrow passed away after a courageous battle with cancer. Her spirit fills my heart today.

Mr. Chairman, I am honored to have been nominated to serve as Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Division because I revere the institution that is the Department of Justice. It was there that I learned to be a lawyer and where the most enduring and formative experiences of my professional career took place.

A year after graduating from law school, I was privileged to begin my career in public service as a special assistant in the Deputy Attorney General's Office. Later, I served as an Assistant United States Attorney for several years in the Northern District of California, where I was fortunate to work closely with men and women who put their lives on the line every day as law enforcement agents for the FBI, ATF, DEA, Customs and Secret Service. I maintained my connection to the Department of Justice even when my career took me to the California Attorney General's office, working with my federal counterparts to tackle issues of civil rights, antitrust enforcement, police officer training and internet crime.

The lessons I learned at the Department of Justice I carried with me into private practice, where my advocacy has encompassed all aspects of civil litigation and included a diverse array of individual and corporate clients.

All of this has given me a deep appreciation for the Department and its singular mission to pursue justice on behalf of the American people. It has also given me a profound respect for the talented career attorneys who do the hard work of ensuring justice everyday.

The career professionals of the Civil Division are prime examples of public servants who work tirelessly to ensure that the interests of the American people and their government are well represented in our Nation's courts. Day in and day out, they come to work ready to meet the challenges posed by difficult times. Their task is often without fanfare, yet their commitment to upholding the integrity of the Nation's laws is unwavering. Their service sets a standard that is to be encouraged and emulated. Should I be confirmed, I will do all within my power to live up to that high standard.

I will do so with the intention of, first, maintaining the safety and security of the American people through the Civil Division's work involving national security and the War on Terror; second, protecting the taxpayers' dollars through the Division's vigilant anti-fraud and False Claims Act enforcement efforts; and third, ensuring the independence of the Department of Justice and a Civil Division characterized by professionalism and non-partisanship.

Mr. Chairman, should I be confirmed, I also look forward to working with you and your congressional colleagues in connection with your oversight responsibilities on matters that fall within the jurisdiction of the Civil Division. And I commit that I will do my best to promote a productive relationship of trust, respect and cooperation.

I thank you again for considering my nomination and I am pleased to respond to any questions you may have.