

Testimony of Secretary-Designate Janet Napolitano before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, "Committee Holds Nomination Hearing for Napolitano"

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Dirksen Senate Office Building
(Remarks as Prepared)

Good Morning. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Collins, Members of the Committee, it is a privilege and an honor to be seated before you today in nomination to serve as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. And it is humbling, because as you know better than anyone, the urgent mission of this enormous agency is critical to the lives and the security of every citizen of the United States.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Collins, I particularly note and commend your foresight and leadership with respect to this agency. After the attacks on 9-11, you understood the need for a more organized, systematic approach in response to acts of domestic terrorism, and you held the vision necessary to forge this new department.

Granted, the birth of an agency is not easy – particularly one that involves 22 separate agencies and more than 200,000 employees. But much has been accomplished in a remarkably short period of time. I salute Secretary Chertoff and Congress for what has been done. I also thank Secretary Chertoff for a well-planned and thorough transition process, the first ever for this department.

I suspect, however, that we agree our work here is not finished. I look forward to our discussion this morning about your observations and interests in this complex organization.

The overriding and urgent mission of the United States Department of Homeland Security is contained in the name of the agency itself. To secure the homeland means to protect our nation's borders by finding and killing the roots of terrorism and to stop those who intend to hurt us; to wisely enforce the rule of law at our borders; to protect our national cyber infrastructure; and to prepare for and respond to natural and man-caused disasters with speed, skill, compassion, and effectiveness.

The Homeland Security mission is of paramount importance to the Obama Administration, to this Committee, and to me. The President-elect and I believe that, in meeting this responsibility, we must deal fairly with all persons and hold firmly to our principles of due process and equal protection under the law.

I also believe that a close working relationship with Congress and with this Committee is essential. I recognize this Committee's expertise, and I will cooperate fully with the Committee and its important oversight functions. I also look forward to the Committee's assistance with and support for identifying ways to make the work of DHS more effective and efficient. After all, we share a common goal: a strong and vigorous Department of Homeland Security.

As Governor of Arizona for the past six years, I have lived at the nexus of a key issue that faces this agency and this nation: that of immigration. I have walked, flown over, and ridden horseback along our southwest border. I appreciate its vastness, as well as the grave consequences of our broken system. I have acted – to the extent a state can – to deal with those realities, and I suspect many of your questions this morning will focus on what we have done and what yet needs to be done. I look forward to becoming as familiar with our northern border as I am the border with Mexico.

I also invite your questions about my work in the myriad of other all-hazard areas which intersect with the mission

of DHS. For example, barely a year into my first term as Governor, Arizona saw the Lewis Prison Hostage Crisis – the longest prison standoff in U.S. history, and one of the few that was resolved without loss of life.

The Kinder-Morgan pipeline break was a man-made disaster, a major disruption to a pipeline supplying gasoline to the Phoenix area. Response to the immediate crisis uncovered critical system deficiencies; as a result, we implemented systemic changes and new procedures to ensure sharing of information between government and the private sector to ensure continuity of critical service.

The effects of drought in the western United States are acutely evident in Arizona, particularly in our forests which now suffer larger and more ferocious wildfires. We fought those fires, and used that experience to forge new, more effective forest management and enhanced fire and disaster response.

Arizona now has an online 2-1-1 system to swiftly deliver information to our citizens in an emergency; our state was among those that mobilized early and effectively to accept and assist evacuees from Hurricane Katrina; and Arizona was one of the first states to create an anti-terrorism law enforcement fusion center that has been cited as a model for other states.

Cyber security and the protection of the technology critical infrastructure have been a top priority in Arizona. As Attorney General, I created the Computer Crimes Unit to train law enforcement in the identification and investigation of cybercrimes; the Unit successfully prosecuted some of the first cybercrime cases in Arizona. As Governor, I created the Statewide Information Security and Privacy Office to ensure adequate controls and safeguards are in place for all State of Arizona government technology systems and business practices.

As Governor, my role is that of Chief Executive Officer and includes all the complexities of management, budget and accountability that are inherent in a multi-faceted organization.

The record of my work in these areas is a public one, and again, I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Please allow me to turn now to some of the issues that I know are of concern to you, and that President-Elect Obama has pledged to address.

To effectively secure our homeland, we must make the operations of this agency more effective. The creation of the Department of Homeland Security was essentially the largest re-organization of the federal government since 1947. As you know well, it was formed of 22 once-separate federal agencies and operates out of 70 buildings at 40 different locations in the Washington area. Forty percent of the workforce is contracted out and morale is low.

If you allow me to do this job, we will work to create a unified vision for this agency. In its short existence, we have seen – sometimes too clearly – the consequences of parochial lines and failure to communicate across those lines. We must and will streamline those communications to make certain the right person has the right information at the right time. We will recruit, train and retain the best and the brightest.

We must and we will build up the working relationships with the other federal agencies whose information, skill and expertise is essential to execution of a coordinated, fully functioning homeland security strategy that is deserving of the respect of American citizens.

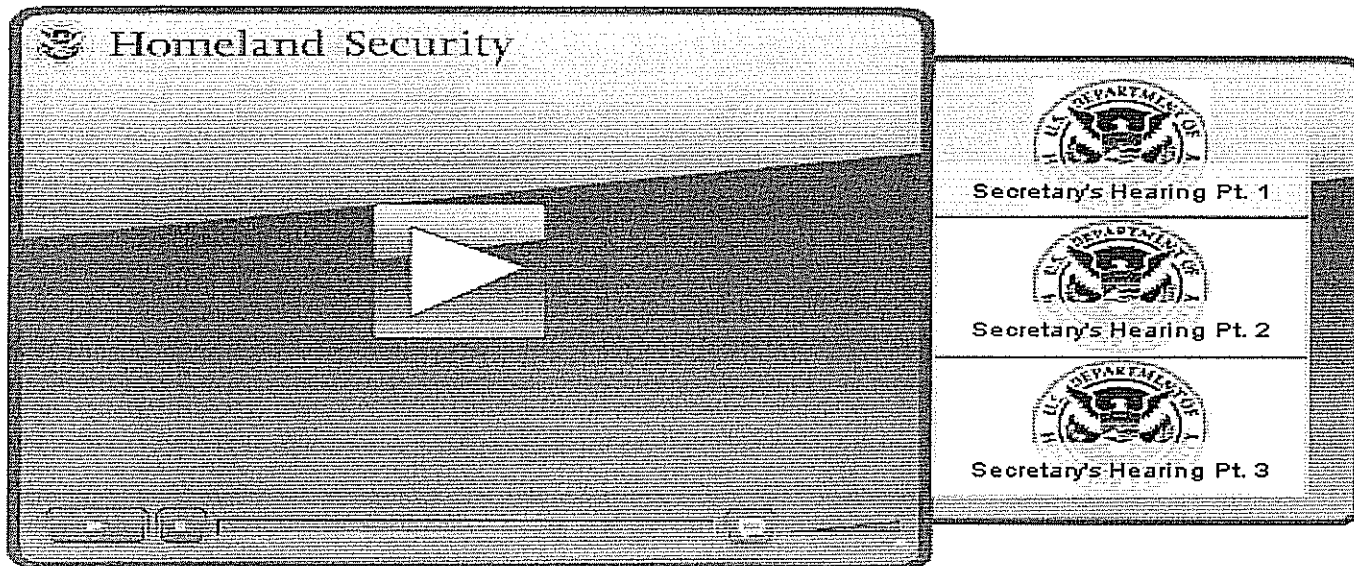
The federal government cannot do this alone. As we strengthen these federal links to fulfill our mission of securing the homeland, we will also heighten and extend our cooperation with state, local, and tribal governments, and the many expert law enforcement, firefighting, and emergency management professionals. We will improve information sharing, strengthen our enforcement mechanisms and intensify accountability, and we will provide more effective means for the private sector to join us in meeting our goals for the safety and security of our nation.

By uniting, professionalizing and strengthening this department we will mature it, simplify it, clarify it and ultimately place it in a better position to fulfill the many duties we are asked to carry out.

Before we proceed further, please allow me to thank the current staff of the Department, especially Deputy Secretary Paul Schneider, for their responsiveness to my questions, for their thorough briefings, and for their commitment to making this transition as smooth as possible. Our goal is to have the national security team in place on January 21st and to have a seamless handoff of responsibility. The DHS staff has worked hard to make that a reality and I am grateful.

Again, I am privileged to appear before you today in consideration of serving as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. I look forward to working with the leadership and members of this Committee to make the Department as effective and efficient as possible. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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This page was last reviewed/modified on January 15, 2009.

VSC Reports Sending I-539s, I-751s and I-130s to CSC

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VSC just advised AILA of the following:

- VSC shipped approximately 9,000 I-539s to CSC on 1/23/09. The dates of receipt on this population of cases range from 9/1/08 to 12/31/08. Another group of I-539s will be sent to CSC in early February.
- VSC will ship approximately 80,000 I-751s from our backlog to CSC starting the week of February 2nd. We intend to ship 10,000 I-751s per week, but will continue to adjudicate incoming I-751s.
- Starting 2/9/2009, all I-130 receipts will go to CSC from the Lockbox.

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