

**STATEMENT
OF
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES
UNITED STATES SENATE**

JULY 9, 2009

Chairman Bingaman, Senator Murkowski, and Members of the Committee, it is a special honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee for the position of Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management at the Department of the Interior. If confirmed by the Senate, this would be the third time that I have had the privilege of serving the people of the United States in a presidentially-appointed/Senate confirmed position, and the second time that I have been afforded such an opportunity at the Department of the Interior. If confirmed, I would bring to the many challenges of the Assistant Secretary position the fruits of my educational background; the litany of skills and experiences amassed during my twenty-eight year professional career; and a strong and unwavering commitment to public service.

I was born in Santurce, Puerto Rico, and grew up in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. During my high school years, I decided that I would pursue a career as a lawyer. This decision was influenced principally by the unconditional love and support of two wonderful parents, and an interest in the legal profession that had its genesis in free time spent observing courtroom proceedings over which my godmother – the first female judge in the Virgin Islands – presided.

During these formative years and thereafter, I was also influenced greatly by a strong family tradition of public service. My late father, Walter Lewis, ended his over forty years of government service after attaining the position of Supervisor of Mails and Delivery for the U.S. Postal Service in the Virgin Islands. My mother, Juta Lewis, ended her career in public service as Assistant District Director of Customs for the Virgin Islands after thirty years with the U.S. Customs Service. And my brother, Warren Lewis, who continues to toil away after over thirty-five years in government service, has served in various capacities including as an Assistant Regional Commissioner for Investigations and District Director with the U.S. Immigration & Naturalization Service, and currently as the Executive Officer of INTERPOL – U.S. National Central Bureau here in Washington, D.C. I saw in the example set by each of these loved ones the kind of strong and positive work ethic, undying dedication, distinguished service, and uncompromising integrity that public service demands and so richly deserves. From my high school days, therefore, I looked forward to the opportunity not only to become a lawyer, but also to devote a portion of my career to public service and to emulate those special qualities exhibited by those nearest and dearest to me.

Following graduation from All Saints Cathedral School in St. Thomas with high honors and as valedictorian of my senior class, from Swarthmore College with a Bachelor of Arts degree with distinction and election to Phi Beta Kappa, and from Harvard Law School with a Juris Doctor degree, I embarked on my legal career. During my twenty-eight year professional career, I have worked in the private sector as both an associate and a partner, in the corporate sector, and for over 15 years with the federal government.

In an extra-curricular capacity, I have also worked as an adjunct faculty member in trial advocacy and served on various boards, commissions and committees.

I believe that the totality of my professional experience renders me well equipped to handle the myriad responsibilities and challenges of the Assistant Secretary position for which I have been nominated. First, I have had a broad range of legal experience, which has included direct and supervisory responsibility for all aspects of civil litigation in a variety of substantive areas in trial and appellate courts; providing legal advice and counsel to senior officials within the Department of the Interior; managing and supervising staffs of various sizes; directing and overseeing the work of the largest United States Attorney's Office in the country as the United States Attorney for the District of Columbia; managing and supervising audit and investigative activities as Inspector General at the Department of the Interior; providing legal representation for individual corporate and governmental clients as a partner in private practice; overseeing the operations of the District of Columbia Board of Elections and Ethics as Chair of the Board; and serving as an adjunct faculty member at the George Washington University National Law Center. From these professional opportunities, I developed the ability to be a quick study, exercise reasoned judgment, analyze complex issues, and engage in effective problem-solving. I also developed a penchant for economy, efficiency, effectiveness and integrity in government operations.

Second, as a former United States Attorney for the District of Columbia and a former Inspector General of the Department of the Interior, I developed a solid law enforcement background and gained extensive experience in providing strong leadership and effective management in major federal agencies. While serving in these capacities, I

was responsible, among other things, for establishing and implementing the vision, priorities, and direction for the organization; high-level decision making and problem solving; promoting excellence, productivity, integrity and accountability within the organization; and fostering cooperation, effective communication, and partnerships with individuals and entities in the private and public sectors and the community at large. The ability to develop innovative approaches to the performance of the organization's mission, and to direct, oversee and participate in the implementation of major initiatives are illustrative of the type of leadership that I was called upon to provide as U.S. Attorney and Inspector General. Undoubtedly, these skills would be invaluable as an Assistant Secretary.

Third, I have interacted and developed productive alliances with a wide range of "constituents" in performing the respective missions of the organizations that I have had the privilege to lead, and in serving on the various boards, commissions and committees to which I have been appointed. These "constituents" have included members of the federal and local bench, members of the bar, officials in the executive and legislative branches of the federal and local governments, the private sector, the business and professional community, and the community at large. The ability to interact and foster productive relationships with diverse groups of individuals would be of great value in dealing effectively with the various stakeholders with which the Department of the Interior comes into contact.

Finally, as the Associate Solicitor for General Law and subsequently the Inspector General for the Department of the Interior from 1993 to 1998, I became familiar with various programs and operations of the Department. Of particular note, while serving as

Inspector General from 1995-1998, I launched the Office's Affirmative Civil Enforcement program. Among the proactive investigative initiatives launched under that program were ones involving the underpayment of royalties on federal mineral leases, the recovery of delinquent coal reclamation fees owed by surface coal operators, and an environmental initiative focusing on violations of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act. I believe that my prior experience at the Department would be a great asset.

I would consider it an honor, and welcome the opportunity, to return to public service as the Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management at the Department of the Interior. If confirmed, I would embark upon this next chapter of my professional career with a clear understanding of the tremendous responsibility that we shoulder as public servants; a keen appreciation for the great privilege that it is to serve the public; and an unwavering commitment to the high ethical and other standards that should always be our guide.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.