

Statement of
Senator Susan M. Collins
Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs

On the nomination of
The Honorable Julie L. Myers
to be Assistant Secretary, Department of Homeland Security

September 12, 2007

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Yesterday's observance of the 9-11 anniversary reminds us that one vital feature of homeland security is having borders that are closed to enemies yet open to friends.

The United States has 6,000 miles of international borders. Nearly 10 percent of those miles mark the frontier of my home state of Maine.

As we saw in the Senate's recent debate on comprehensive immigration reform, the American

people emphatically consider border security and interior enforcement as critical issues.

The vital work of coordinating interior enforcement with border security, and forging effective partnerships with state and local law enforcement, falls to Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Besides these important missions, ICE also combats drug trafficking, human smuggling, immigration benefit fraud, and international trade in child pornography, among other threats to society. No wonder it is the largest investigative arm of DHS.

A few days from now will mark the second anniversary of the Committee's first nomination hearing for Assistant Secretary Myers. The failure of the full Senate to consider her confirmation was

largely based on concerns about her management experience. Now, however, her work for more than a year and a half as a recess appointee gives this Committee an on-the-job performance record to examine that was not available to us two years ago. Based on the interviews the Committee has conducted, I believe concerns about Ms. Myers's managerial experience have largely evaporated.

Nevertheless, ICE faces huge challenges in conducting complex investigations of drug and alien smuggling networks, which can provide sources of revenue for terrorist organizations and avenues for terrorists to enter our country.

Many alien smuggling organizations rely on fraudulent documents and attempts to fraudulently obtain immigration benefits. Last year, the *Portland*

***Press Herald* uncovered examples of companies applying for H-1B visas for employees in Maine when those companies appeared to have no legitimate business operations in the state. Therefore, I am particularly interesting in hearing how ICE has targeted its investigative efforts on unscrupulous employers who have sought to commit immigration benefit fraud.**

ICE also has been tasked with ensuring the detention and removal of the estimated 12 million illegal immigrants within our borders. Making this task even more daunting is doing so in a way that respects the law and that is reasonable and fair.

Another issue worthy of our attention is the release from state and local correctional facilities of illegal aliens charged or convicted of crime – even

violent crime – *after* they enter our country. The DHS Inspector General has called this an “unofficial mini-amnesty program for criminal and other high-risk aliens.” I call it an outrageous failure in homeland security. I applaud the Department's accomplishment of ending the flawed “catch and release” policy where illegal aliens were detained near the border only to be released with a summons to appear in court at a later date – where, of course, they almost never appeared. But, the failure to remove these *criminals* after they are caught by law enforcement must not continue. I look forward to hearing Assistant Secretary Myers’s views on how we can correct this situation.

Welcome, Assistant Secretary Myers.

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