

Opening Statement of Steven N. Berk
Nominee to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia
March 2, 2016

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee: I am honored to appear before you today as a nominee for the position of Associate Judge of the Superior Court for the District of Columbia. I would like to thank the DC Judicial Nomination Commission, and in particular its Chairman, Federal District Court Judge Emmet Sullivan, for their encouragement and for recommending me to the White House. I'd like to thank the President for nominating me. And thank you Congresswoman Norton for your kind introductory words this morning.

I would like to acknowledge my colleagues, friends, and family who are here today and have also been with me throughout this journey. I'd especially like to recognize, my two sons, Corey and Jacob; and my mother, who flew in from Chicago. She raised me to always strive for excellence in whatever endeavor I chose to pursue; and to my wife, Jenny, who has never wavered in her support, picking me up when my spirits wavered, and believing in me sometimes more than I believed in myself.

Someone who I wish were here is my father, who died last year after a long and valiant battle with cancer. At the close of World War II, American soldiers liberated my dad from the Dachau concentration camp. He was days from death, suffering from profound malnutrition and typhus. He eventually regained his health and came to the United States, as an orphan in 1948. Two years later he was a member of the United States Army serving two tours of duty on the front lines in Korea before returning to Chicago, marrying my mom, and eventually becoming a successful entrepreneur. He loved this country and I miss him very much today.

I attended law school, because I was interested in public service. That service brought me to Washington in 1989 where I worked as a prosecutor at the Securities Exchange Commission and the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia. As a young partner at Jenner & Block, I spent thousands of hours on pro bono matters. After taking a short break from the practice of law, I returned on a trajectory, representing individuals, such as defrauded investors, consumers, small business owners and whistleblowers.

Over the past five years, I have continued to demonstrate a commitment to public service by volunteering for and being elected to leadership positions at the DC Bar. I served as a member of and, later, Chair of, the Judicial Evaluations Committee. I have also been elected Treasurer and currently sit as a Member of the Board of Governors.

If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, I will commit to having everyone in the courtroom treated with dignity and respect. I will be decisive and make timely and thoughtful decisions. And I will be prepared, by reading the papers and studying the facts and law before taking the bench.

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination. I will be pleased to answer any of your questions.