

Opening Statement of Donald Walker Tunnage
Nominee to be Associate Judge of the District of Columbia Superior Court

Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, and members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am deeply grateful to you and your dedicated Committee staff for considering my nomination. I would also like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the members of the Judicial Nomination Commission and specifically its chair, the Honorable Emmet G. Sullivan, for recommending me to the White House, and I thank President Joseph Biden for nominating me to become an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. This nomination and the opportunity to appear before you today are easily the highest honors of my professional career.

I appear today buttressed by the enthusiastic support of my extended family, close friends, schoolmates, and colleagues. Through unwavering support, they have mentored, supported, and encouraged me in life and throughout my career. I offer special mention to my husband, Juan Ruiz Rojas, whose dedication and commitment is the fulcrum that allows me to successfully balance family, work, and co-parenting our four-year-old son, Alec. Guiding and being a loving, caring, and providing Papa to Alec is the eternal commitment in my life. My mother, Linda Walker, a formerly retired public-school administrator who returned to her career in education, which is more accurately her life's calling, is watching with great excitement and unbridled love and support from Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Finally, I offer special mention to my late father, a veteran of the United States Army and a retired public-school educator affectionately known simply as Don. I am my father's namesake, and his unwavering support uplifted and encouraged me during his lifetime, while the memory of his unconditional love is a personal comfort that has sustained me since his passing.

The entirety of my professional practice has been in pursuit of fair process and equal treatment. Since 2000, I have had the honor and privilege of being a career trial attorney in the Department of Justice, where I have represented the United States in the enforcement of laws to ensure full and fair participation of all citizens in material life activities, such as housing, employment, and the constitutional right to be secure in their persons and effects. During my two-decades career as a Justice Department trial attorney, I appeared in federal districts courts in more than ten states and dutifully served without interruption under five presidential administrations. Prior to joining the Justice Department, I served as an assistant public defender, where my advocacy was for trial proceedings that were fair and constitutionally compliant.

In my professional experience, I have practiced as a criminal-defense counsel, a civil litigator, and a criminal prosecutor. I have appeared in both state appellate courts and federal district courts. In each role and every court appearance, I have advocated for equality under law and procedural fairness. If I am granted the honor of confirmation, those will be my guide posts as I seek to ensure the fair and impartial administration of justice. Finally, I restate my sincere gratitude, Mr. Chairman, to you and the Committee members for considering my nomination, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have of me.