

EDUARDO AGUIRRE
JUNE 6, 2003 – TESTIMONY
U. S. SENATE – JUDICIARY COMMITTEE CONFIRMATION HEARING

Mr. Chairman, Senators. I am very pleased to come before you today as you consider my nomination to be the first-ever Director of the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services in the newly created Department of Homeland Security. At the onset, I would like to thank my wife of 35 years, Maria Teresa Aguirre for her continued support in my quest to serve my country through public service. Representing our family and with me today, is my daughter Tessie who is a senior at Texas A & M University and is studying in Washington, D.C. this summer.

Should the Senate act favorably on my nomination, this would mark my second Senate Confirmed Presidential Appointment service to my adopted country. Almost 42 years ago, I came to this land of freedom and opportunity as a 15-year-old Cuban refugee with no family, no money, and no working knowledge of the English language. Along the way, I was sheltered and taught by Catholic Charities, cared for by the United Way, and helped by many, many others. Later, a very affordable U.S. Government student loan program allowed me to attend college and eventually earn a degree from Louisiana State University. I have overcome real and imagined obstacles on my journey to realize my version of the American Dream, and I am grateful beyond words. I am extremely proud and humbled to have been selected by President George W. Bush to serve the United States in his Administration.

The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services is responsible for providing the right immigration benefits, in the right amount of time, to the right applicants; and to prevent the wrong ones from accessing our benefits. The United States always has, and continues to be, a nation of immigrants. On a personal level, I share President Bush's vision of "welcoming immigrants with open arms...not endless lines". If confirmed, I look forward to working with Secretary Ridge, Deputy Secretary England and the rest of Homeland Security leadership and staff, in addition to others in President Bush's Administration, to advance our country's immigration agenda, including a serious focus for the security responsibilities within our scope. Also, as demonstrated in my position as Vice Chairman and Chief Operating Officer of the Export-Import Bank of the United States, I welcome the opportunity to work with the Senate and the House of Representatives.

I am confident that one and one half years in a leadership role at the Ex-Im Bank, thirty-four years in commercial banking, and a number of hands-on civic leadership roles, have prepared me to accept this considerable challenge. Beyond my inherent sensitivity to immigrant issues, I hope to bring to the job my proven management and leadership skills, my customer service background, my broad risk analysis experience, a respectful awe for the trust placed on me, an open mind, and some measure of common sense. These skills should be particularly important to the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services as we face the unique challenges of the 21st Century. My vision is to lead a world-class Bureau that will excel in customer service and effective risk management. During my tenure, Integrity, Respect and Ingenuity, will be our core values.

In closing, I want to acknowledge my family as the bedrock of my value system. We are hard-working, God-fearing people who recognize and treasure our immigrant roots as we strive to give back some of the many blessings that have come our way.

Mr. Chairman, Senators, I respectfully ask for your favorable consideration of my nomination and stand ready to respond to any questions that you may have.

Thank you for your attention.