

OPENING STATEMENT OF JOSE A. SUAREZ

Good morning Chairman McDonald, Chairman Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Jose Suarez, and it is truly a pleasure to appear before you today. I am honored and humbled to be considered for a position as a Superior Court Judge. I want to thank Governor Rell for nominating me and this Committee for its time and consideration.

I was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1966 and lived there until I was about 11 years old. My parents are strong believers in education and felt that we should move to Connecticut so that my sister my brother and I could have the very best education. In 1977 we moved to Connecticut and I entered the sixth grade with very little, if any, knowledge of English. My parents sacrificed much to make this possible. My mother worked as an elementary school teacher in Stamford during the day and would then work part-time at night. She even found time to finish a masters degree. I learned early on by example that you can achieve anything as long as you work hard for it.

I graduated from High School in 1984 and from the University of Dayton in 1989. I went on to the University Of Connecticut School Of Law and graduated in 1993.

I started my legal career with Friedle & Ustach, a small general practice firm in New Britain, Connecticut. Although the firm concentrated on family law, we handled a wide variety of cases ranging from personal injury to real estate. I was particularly interested in criminal law, so I accepted a special public defenders' contract and handled a variety of criminal matters in the New Britain GA.

In 1996, I accepted a position with the Office of the Attorney General and was assigned to the child protection unit. I primarily covered the Hartford and New Britain Juvenile courts where I routinely handled 15 to 22 cases on any given short calendar day and was assigned one or two neglect trials per week. This experience was exhilarating and satisfying. I was ultimately assigned to the Child Protection Session in Middletown, a court designed to handle trials particularly termination of parental rights. In this position, I handled at least two trials per month, ranging from two to five days each.

During the summer of 2003, I requested a transfer to the environment unit of the Attorney General's Office where I currently practice. Approximately 80% of my responsibilities include handling complex multi-state litigation in federal district courts throughout the country. Specifically, I handle litigation against power plants for violations of the federal Clean Air Act. I also challenge federal air pollution regulations in federal district and circuit courts throughout the country. These regulations range from controlling CO2 emissions from automobiles to mercury emissions from power plants.

In addition to my federal litigation responsibilities, I also handle a variety of state enforcement cases. These cases include hazardous waste spills, land use and public safety issues.

I have tried over 60 cases to conclusion in Connecticut and have argued before the state's Appellate and Supreme Courts.

I am grateful to the many people who have helped me achieve my goals over the years. I, therefore, feel compelled to give back to the community and have served on the board of directors of the Hispanic Health Counsel, Mercy Housing and Shelter, the Connecticut Hispanic Bar Association and the University Of Connecticut School Of Law Alumni Association.

Throughout my legal career, I have had to study and learn several different areas of law. Some of these areas are extremely complicated from a legal and technical point of view. I have always welcomed these challenges and I have worked tirelessly until I felt comfortable with the subject.

My greatest professional satisfaction is looking at a set of facts, figuring out what the law is and applying the facts to the law to arrive at a conclusion. This is what judges do. When they undertake this task, they are not advocating a particular outcome; rather they are looking for a just answer to a problem. That is why I want to be a judge and I can assure you that, if confirmed, I will perform the duties of a judge diligently, fairly and respectfully.

I thank you again for your time and consideration.