

**STATEMENT OF
ROBERT T. ANDERSON
NOMINEE FOR THE POSITION OF
SOLICITOR OF THE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES SENATE**

MAY 18, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, and members of the Committee. I am honored to be with you as President Joe Biden’s nominee to be the Solicitor of the Department of the Interior.

I am joined this morning by my daughter, Sydney, but regret that my wonderful wife, Marilyn Heiman, is unable to join me at this hearing. First, I would like to talk about my values and commitment to public service.

I was born in a rural area of northeastern Minnesota in the midst of some of the most wild and beautiful public lands in the lower 48 states. My family lived in the town of Ely, adjacent to what is now the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and the Superior National Forest.

My parents, John and Eleanor, raised me and my four older brothers in Ely. We spent the summers living at and helping my widowed Grandmother operate a rustic family resort composed of seven drafty cabins on the shores of Burntside Lake.

My Grandfather had used his World War I “bonus money” for the down payment on the property, which remains in our family to this day.

This is in the aboriginal territory of the Ojibwe people and I am proud to be a tribal citizen of the Bois Forte Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. I am grateful for my upbringing in and around Ely.

I took for granted the joy and wonder of being in a forest where I could play, hunt, and enjoy clean lakes for swimming and fishing. My time in large cities has made me acutely aware of the importance of public lands to all Americans.

At the same time, my rural roots exposed me to the ongoing struggle to balance conservation with economic development. My Dad worked in an underground iron

mine when I was a young child, but we also depended on the tourist industry for part of our livelihood. I've witnessed the boom and bust cycles in logging and mining, and the intense local debates over the appropriate balance of conservation and development.

I am proud of the fact that my four brothers and I all graduated as first generation college students in our family. I attended local public schools and graduated from a small state university and the University of Minnesota School of Law. I received an outstanding education that was also affordable.

I regret that my parents and my older brother Mark, who like me was a lawyer, have passed away. I think that they would have been pleased to see where I sit today.

My first law job was as a staff attorney for the non-profit Native American Rights fund based in Boulder, Colorado. In 1984, I moved to Anchorage, Alaska as one of two attorneys who opened NARF's Alaska office to work on matters related to tribal status, tribal jurisdiction, and Native hunting and fishing rights.

I had the gratifying experience of representing a revered Alaska Native elder named Katie John in her successful battle to secure her subsistence fishing rights guaranteed under federal law. I was able to represent Alaska Native tribes and organizations throughout the state on matters related to tribal self-determination, and protection of subsistence rights under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

In the course of this work, I came to know Secretary Babbitt and Solicitor John Leshy through the Katie John litigation as I sought to persuade the government to join the Alaska Native side of the litigation – a successful effort.

Shortly after that, I was appointed to be the Associate Solicitor for Indian Affairs at the Department, a job I held for two years. After that, I served as Counselor to the Secretary for the remaining three years of the Administration.

In that position, my portfolio crossed all Bureaus in the Department, exposing me to the breadth of the Department's important missions, experiences that will serve well should I be confirmed as Solicitor.

Upon leaving DOI in late 2000, I entered academia and for 20 years I was a law professor at the University of Washington and directed its Native American Law Center. For the past twelve years I have also been a Visiting Professor of Law at Harvard Law School where I have taught for one semester per year.

I am a co-author and editor of two books on Federal Indian Law and have published many articles in the fields of natural resources law, water law, and American Indian law.

If confirmed, I would be honored and humbled to work with Secretary Haaland to achieve her and the President's goals to protect our environment, fulfill the federal trust responsibility to Indian Nations, and act as a responsible steward of our natural resources for future generations.

I commit to high ethical standards in all aspects of the Interior Department's operations. I look forward to the opportunity to serve as the leader of over 400 tremendous attorneys who have dedicated their careers to public service.

Thank you, and I am ready to answer any questions you may have.