

Statement of Douglas William Domenech
Nominee for the Position of Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Insular Areas
Before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
July 20, 2017

Chairman Murkowski, Senator Cantwell, and Members of the Committee, I am deeply humbled and honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee for the position of Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas at the Department of the Interior.

I am also deeply grateful to Secretary Zinke for recommending me to the President for this important position.

Joining me this morning are members of my family: my wife of 38 years, Jeanne, whom I met in forestry school, my son Ben, who worked at one point in the office of Senator John Cornyn, my daughter Emily, who is the Energy Subcommittee staff director for the House Science Committee, and my son-in-law Eric, who retired this week as a Sergeant First Class in the U.S. Army. My daughter Florence was unable to attend and my son, Ellis, could not be here today as he is currently deployed in the War on Terror.

As you know, the Office of Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas coordinates federal policy for the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. In addition, the Office is responsible for administering and overseeing U.S. federal assistance to the freely associated states of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau.

The office also manages nine little known American territories with no permanent populations such as Palmyra, Baker, and Howland islands.

I'm truly honored and thankful to have received the endorsement of the four territorial Governors; Governor Moliga of American Samoa, Governor Torres of the Northern Mariana Islands, Governor Mapp of the Virgin Islands, and Governor Calvo of Guam.

I would also like to thank all of the Congressional Delegates from the Insular Areas who have each taken the time to meet with me before this hearing. I appreciate their input and should I be confirmed, I look forward to working with each of them moving forward.

I regret that my parents could not be here to witness this moment. Unfortunately both have passed away and are buried in Arlington National Cemetery. My father, born in Santurce, Puerto Rico, spent his career serving our country in the United States Army.

In many ways, my father's service to the country brings me here today. Like many military families, we moved around the country with each new assignment. As a native Spanish speaker, my father's deployments were often to Latin America and so we lived in Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico.

In fact, while attending Antilles High School in Puerto Rico I took my first trip to the Virgin Islands. I was playing defensive end on my high school football team and we flew to St. Thomas to play against their high school team. We lost. In fact we lost every time we played the Virgin Islands team.

After receiving my college degree in forestry and wildlife management from Virginia Tech, and undertaking a career in that field, I had the opportunity to serve in the George W. Bush Administration in a number of positions at the Department of the Interior. During that time I was asked by then Secretary Dirk Kempthorne to serve as his appointee to the Advisory Council for the Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico and later as the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas.

That appointment gave me the opportunity to work on issues - and travel to - Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the Mariana Islands. These visits afforded me the occasion to work on health care capacity issues, foreign worker policy, invasive species concerns, and the unique challenges of affordable energy on the islands. Of special note, I had the unique assignment to lead a US Geological Survey volcanologist team to the remote northern island of Pagan (paw-gun) to investigate its energy potential.

After the end of the Bush Administration, I was honored to be selected and confirmed as Virginia's Secretary of Natural Resources. In that role I oversaw six state environmental, recreation, and historic resource agencies and worked with the Governor to improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay, achieve the best year on record for clean air, build oyster and blue crab populations, and reintroduce elk to southwest Virginia. We invested in land conservation and worked with Virginia's 11 state recognized Indian tribes to permanently protect historically significant Werowocomoco, the village of Indian Chief Powhatan.

These experiences together bring me before you today.

The people living on these remote islands face unique economic, national security, and environmental challenges. Our fellow Americans should feel confident that the U.S. government will help address their concerns. If confirmed I pledge to work with the members of this Committee to do just that.

Thank you.