

## **Statement by Gregory H. Woods**

### **Before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources**

**September 15, 2011**

Chairman Bingaman, Ranking Member Murkowski, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you today.

First, I would like to thank President Obama for nominating me to serve as General Counsel of the U.S. Department of Energy. I intend to work hard to justify the confidence that he has placed in me.

I also want to thank Secretary Chu for asking me to serve as his counsel. I look forward to the opportunity to advise him and his team as they develop and implement policies to address our Nation's energy needs. I would also like to thank Secretary LaHood and my colleagues at the Department of Transportation, without whose tutelage and support I could not have developed the skills that I hope to bring to further service at the Department of Energy.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Mary, my children, Ainsley Mae and Jamie, and my family and friends, both present and afar, for their love and support.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, the General Counsel is the principal legal officer of the Department, responsible for ensuring that the Department operates in full compliance with the law. The General Counsel provides legal advice and counsel to the Secretary and his colleagues, represents the Department as counsel before other Federal governmental agencies, and works with the Department of Justice to represent the agency before the courts. The General Counsel does not do all of this on his own: the Department has a dedicated, energetic staff of career attorneys. I look forward to working with that team and drawing on its deep expertise.

This nomination is a great honor for me; it has been a journey for me to get here. My wife and I are raising our children together in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City, but I was raised alone by my mother in Philadelphia, and my family's roots are in West Virginia. Both of my parents were born in Morgantown; my grandfather and great-grandfather mined coal for a living. My mother worked several jobs at a time when I was growing up to provide the education that made it possible for me to be here today.

After graduating from Williams College in Massachusetts, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend Yale Law School. Following my graduation from law school, I joined the United States Department of Justice as a Trial Attorney, attracted by the prospect of serving the United States. At the Justice Department, I prosecuted fraud cases against government contractors under the False Claims Act. That was invaluable preparation—I have had the personal experience of litigating on behalf of the United States, and I learned intimately the government contracting process and how it can be abused.

I left the Department of Justice in 1998 to join Debevoise & Plimpton, a leading New York-based law firm. After six years as an associate in the firm's corporate department, I was promoted to become an equity partner of the firm. My practice was varied, but focused on financing complex acquisitions and joint-venture arrangements. In each of the last three years of my five years at the firm as a partner, I was recognized by Chambers USA as one of the leading lawyers in New York for banking and finance.

In 2009, I left my firm to become the Deputy General Counsel at the Department of Transportation. There, I help to oversee and manage the legal and regulatory affairs of a cabinet department with over 55,000 employees and 500 lawyers. In my work at DOT over the last two-plus years, I have dealt with the broad range of issues that regularly confront lawyers in government service and learned from valued colleagues how to cultivate and develop a strong legal team. I will draw on that experience to manage the legal affairs of the Department of Energy.

I have learned from good experience at the Department of Transportation how important it is for government agencies to have open and honest lines of communication with the Congress. If confirmed, I hope to have many opportunities to work closely with the Members of this Committee and your staff.

Mr. Chairman, I hope that you and this Committee will conclude that I have the qualifications required for the position for which I have been nominated. I will come to the Department with a wide range of high-level legal experience, management skills, dedication, and judgment honed during my years of practice in government service and the private sector.

Thank you and the Committee once again for this opportunity to appear before you. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.