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**STATEMENT OF ROBERT C. BONNER
NOMINEE FOR COMMISSIONER OF THE U.S. CUSTOMS SERVICE
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
UNITED STATES SENATE**

Chairman Baucus, Senator Grassley, and members of the Committee, I am delighted to appear before you today to discuss my nomination to be the Commissioner of the United States Customs Service.

Before I begin my statement, I would like to acknowledge and introduce my wife, Kimiko. Without her love and her unwavering support and assistance throughout my career, I can assure you that I would not be here today. I also am delighted that my daughter, Justine Bonner, the light of my life, could be here today. Justine is doing important public service in her own right. She is a schoolteacher, teaching American History to eighth graders in New York City at an alternative school in lower Manhattan.

I want to express my appreciation to President Bush for nominating me to head the United States Customs Service. I also want to thank Secretary O'Neill for his support and confidence in me. I look forward to working with the outstanding team he has assembled at the Treasury Department, including the Deputy Secretary-Designate Ken Dam and the Under Secretary for Enforcement-Designate Jimmy Gurulé.

I come before you today as someone who has spent one-half of my 35-year professional career in public service, and one-half in the private sector – in the private practice of the law. I have had the good fortune to serve our government in a number of important posts, including over five years as the United States Attorney for the Central District of California, managing and heading the second largest U.S. Attorney's Office in the country. For nearly three and one-half years, I was the Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). In between these two positions, I served as a United States District Judge in Los Angeles. My experience managing the DEA and the United States Attorney's Office has provided me with experience that will be of considerable benefit to me in leading Customs.

I am enthused about the prospect of heading the U.S. Customs Service, an agency with a mission of great importance to our nation, its people, and its commerce. During my career, I have worked side-by-side with the Customs Service, both as a federal prosecutor and as the DEA Administrator. The dedication and commitment of the men and women of the U.S. Customs Service have consistently impressed me. Indeed, the United States Customs Service is, and should be, an international leader in terms of professionalism, personnel and technology.

In my view, the next Commissioner of Customs must emphasize both the trade and the enforcement sides of the Customs Service, and this means striking the right balance between these two important missions of Customs. Effective enforcement of our drug, trade, and anti-smuggling laws and protection of our borders are, of course, a fundamental obligation of Customs – and, indeed, they are a core governmental responsibility of the federal government. This responsibility must not overshadow Customs' important role in facilitating trade and working with the trade industry to make Customs more efficient.

I believe an appropriate balance can be achieved through better identification of risks and better allocation of resources to meet those risks. Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) and reforms of the ways that Customs does business will also be important to achieving this balance. One of my highest priorities as Commissioner will be the successful and timely design, implementation and funding of ACE. Other priorities will be to meet the explosive growth in international trade as well as the law enforcement challenges of drug trafficking, money laundering, international terrorism, counterfeit goods, cybercrime and protection of our borders.

I am excited about the opportunity to return to public service as the head of United States Customs Service, and, if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the members of this Committee and Congress to meet the challenges facing Customs.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.