

**Statement of Senator Joseph Lieberman
Nomination of Elaine Duke
Under Secretary of Management, Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC
June 20, 2008**

I am pleased to support Elaine Duke's nomination as Under Secretary for Management at the Department of Homeland Security and I also want to take this opportunity to commend her for her more than quarter of a century in public service.

Thomas Jefferson once said that: "A nation that rests on the will of the people must also depend on individuals to support its institutions in whatever ways are appropriate if it is to flourish. Persons qualified for public office should feel some obligation to make that contribution."

Ms. Duke has chosen to make that contribution in one of the most underappreciated but, in the end, vitally important areas of government service – contracting and procurement – making sure the taxpayers are getting their money's worth for each from every dollar of government spending.

Until joining DHS, Ms. Duke's career spanned the breadth of government and the width of our nation – from Charleston, S.C., to Hawaii to Washington with stints in the Air Force, the Navy, the Railroad Administration and the Smithsonian Institute.

At DHS, Ms. Duke has been part of the team charged with the daunting mission of merging 22 separate federal agencies with different missions, procedures and cultures into one effective agency dedicated to preparation and response to disasters whether natural or at the hands of our terrorist enemies.

Of course there have been problems.

Some of the Department's largest acquisition programs – Deepwater, SBINet, and radiation detection portal monitors – have also been the most troubled and need better leadership.

Also, the Department's heavy reliance on contractors to perform basic services raises serious questions about whether DHS is building sufficient internal capacity and institutional knowledge. DHS still has insufficient capacity to develop requirements and evaluate the technical feasibility of contractors' proposals.

In addition, the remainder of this year the Department must take great care to ensure that it is prepared for the transition to a new Administration – the first time DHS will have been faced with this challenge. Historically, terrorists have viewed governmental transitions as a time of vulnerability, and I know Ms. Duke and other leaders in the Department are working hard to make sure that a smooth transition occurs.

I look forward to working with Ms. Duke on these and other issues going forward.

Ms. Duke herself spoke of the enormity of the task DHS faces in an interview where she said: “The geographic footprint [of DHS] is worldwide. We have about 208,000 employees, and the budget for Fiscal Year 2007 was \$42.8 billion. The organizational structure is made up of a headquarters with both the traditional headquarters activities and four distinct directorates with operational focus. That's the National Preparedness Directorate, Science and Technology, the Under Secretary of Management, and FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency].... We also have six operational components: the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Customs and Immigration Service, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, and the United States Coast Guard.”

She went on to say: “I think that the focus is on how you bring people together, how you stay focused on a solution, how you cut through obstacles and know when enough talking is enough and when it’s time to make a decision.”

Our nation is lucky to have women and men of Ms. Duke’s dedication who are ready to answer Jefferson’s centuries old call to duty and use her talents to make her special contribution.