

Senator DURBIN. Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield to Senator Fitzgerald, as the nomination was made by him, but I certainly support it. I would like him to make the opening statement.

Senator GRAHAM. Absolutely. Senator Fitzgerald.

PRESENTATION OF SAMUEL DER-YEGHIAYAN, NOMINEE TO BE U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS, BY HON. PETER FITZGERALD, A U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

Senator FITZGERALD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Senator Durbin.

I am pleased to introduce to the Committee Hon. Judge Sam Der-Yeghiayan, and to strongly support his nomination to the bench for the Northern District of Illinois.

Since his admission to the Illinois Bar in 1978, Judge Der-Yeghiayan has distinguished himself among his peers. In his more than 20 years of experience in the Federal judicial system, Judge Der-Yeghiayan has personally litigated and adjudicated thousands of cases. At a time when vacancies in the court system have pressed the limits of the Federal Judiciary, it should be pointed out that since his appointment to the U.S. Immigration Court in Chicago, Judge Der-Yeghiayan carried one of the heaviest case loads in the entire immigration court system.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, Judge Der-Yeghiayan's area of expertise is in the field of immigration law. As an immigrant of Armenian descent who came to the United States at the age of 19, I am sure it is not accident that he is now one of the leading authorities in this complex field. I have also been advised that if and when Judge Der-Yeghiayan is formally confirmed by the Senate, he will be the first immigrant of Armenian descent ever nominated and confirmed for the Federal Judiciary.

Judge Der-Yeghiayan began his legal career as an honored law graduate under the Attorney General's Honors Program, and was appointed in 1978 as a trial attorney for the Immigration and Naturalization Service in Chicago. Four years later Judge Der-Yeghiayan was promoted to the position of District Counsel for the INS Chicago District with jurisdiction over the States of Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin. From 1982 to 2000 he managed one of the largest INS legal proceedings programs in the Nation, and supervised a staff of over 20 Government attorneys, including Special Assistant United States Attorneys.

During his time with the INS Judge Der-Yeghiayan served as part of the Government team litigating cases in both the U.S. District Courts and the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. He also served on various national legal committees, including the Committee on National Security and Antiterrorism.

In 1988 Judge Der-Yeghiayan was detailed to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, where he served as the U.S. Justice Department's sole representative on refugee and other matters.

Judge Der-Yeghiayan is the recipient of numerous awards and commendations from prestigious legal organizations, including the Justice Department, the Chicago Bar Association, and the Federal Bar Association. On March 6, 2003, Judge Der-Yeghiayan was honored by the American Immigration Law Foundation with the Immi-

grant Achievement Award for his outstanding contributions to America and the American legal system. In 1998 he received the District Counsel of the Year Award from the Commissioner of the INS and the Attorney General of the United States. Furthermore, the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary unanimously endorsed Judge Der-Yeghiayan as qualified for appointment to the U.S. District Court.

Samuel Der-Yeghiayan earned his BA in 1975 from Evangel University in Springfield, Missouri, where he majored in political science. In 1978 he earned his JD degree from the Franklin Pierce Law Center in Concord, New Hampshire, where he served on the Law Review.

Judge Der-Yeghiayan is a fine man, a distinguished citizen of our State of Illinois, and will be a tremendous asset to the Federal Judiciary.

Mr. Chairman, if I could just ask Judge Der-Yeghiayan and his wife, Becky, who are here in the room with us, to please stand up. There they are in the back.

Senator GRAHAM. Welcome. Thank you for coming.

Senator FITZGERALD. They also have two adult children who are not with us, Tara and Jared. So thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee for your time.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Senator Fitzgerald.

Senator Durbin?

PRESENTATION OF SAMUEL DERYEGHIAYAN, NOMINEE TO BE DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS, BY HON. DICK DURBIN, A U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

Senator DURBIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I will be brief. It is no reflection on Judge Der-Yeghiayan's qualifications. But Senator Fitzgerald and I have this bipartisan effort that has been extremely successful in filling every vacancy that has come our way, and this is further evidence of it.

When I had a chance to meet with Judge Der-Yeghiayan, I think what impressed me the most was he had received commendations from the INS, from the Department of Justice, and as Senator Fitzgerald just noted, within the last few months from an organization of immigration lawyers. I think anyone who can earn the trust of both Federal law enforcement as well as immigrant communities, understands the responsibilities of a judge, and that is why I think he is going to be an excellent appointment.

And I think the fact that he is an immigrant is a reminder to all of us, particularly as an immigrant from Middle Eastern background, is a reminder to all of us of the importance of immigration to America. It is the diversity of this Nation which makes it so strong, and Judge Der-Yeghiayan has demonstrated that he has come to our shores and given us a lot. I am sure he will give us more.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. Thanks, Senator. A very impressive group of nominees we have today.

At this time the Committee would like to recognize Congressmen Doc Hastings and George Nethercutt.