

STATEMENT OF CHARLOTTE A. BURROWS
NOMINEE FOR COMMISSIONER,
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND PENSIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

November 13, 2014

Good afternoon, Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Alexander, and distinguished Members of the Committee. It is an honor to appear before this Committee, which meant so much to my former boss, Senator Kennedy.

I would like to thank the President for this nomination and to express my deep and abiding appreciation for the confidence and support of my family. Some of them are here today, including my father, Dr. Rodney Burrows, who as both a veteran and a former political science professor, helped instill in me respect for our American democracy and the importance of this body. I would also like to introduce my uncle, John C. Honor, Jr., and my aunt, Vivian Honor. My thanks as well to my brother, Bruce Burrows, and my sister, Dr. Stephanie Burrows, for their support and good wishes. The experience of growing up as the middle child between two very different, opinionated and incredibly intelligent siblings helped me to see others' perspectives, to negotiate, and to look for opportunities for compromise – skills that will be useful if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed. I'd also like to introduce my husband, Tilman Wuerschmidt and my son, Cy Alan Wuerschmidt, and to thank them – although words can in no way fully express the debt I owe – for their love, patience, support and many sacrifices throughout my career in public service.

In the 50 years since the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was established, America has made great progress toward achieving the goal of equal employment opportunity. Women are not only entering the workforce in greater numbers, but increasingly are doing so in positions of leadership. Thanks in large part to the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act, which Chairman Harkin was instrumental in passing, new doors of opportunity are open to persons with disabilities. And more workers than perhaps ever before can be confident that they will be judged on their qualifications and performance, not their race, color, national origin, sex, religion, disability, age or genetic information.

Despite that progress, unfortunately, as a society, we have yet to completely eliminate prejudice and discrimination from the work place, and the EEOC's mission remains critical. For workers and their families, effective enforcement of our nation's civil rights laws is vital to ensuring they have an equal opportunity to work hard, succeed, and provide for their children. Our nation is strongest when everyone is included, and everyone has a chance to contribute. Until we completely eliminate the barriers of discrimination from the workplace, our economy will continue to be deprived of the full benefit of the many, diverse talents of American workers.

Quality enforcement is also important for our nation's businesses, the vast majority of which not only comply with the law, but have been at the forefront of ensuring fairness in the workplace. Employers have a great deal of expertise about what works to achieve equal job opportunity, and I view the business community as a critical partner in the Commission's work.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with all members of the Commission and *all* interested parties, including this Committee, on our common goal of equal employment opportunity. In my current role as Associate Deputy Attorney General, part of my job has been to address employment issues both in terms of the federal government's role in protecting workers *and* its status as one of America's largest employers. As such, I must often coordinate with – and sometimes mediate between – Department litigators who bring plaintiff-side job discrimination cases, and those who defend federal agencies when they are sued as employers. That role has given me insight into the needs and perspectives of both employers and workers, and strengthened my conviction that there is almost always room for common ground between the two.

Mr. Chairman, I am honored to be considered for this position and for the opportunity to assist the Commission in its critical mission. For nearly my entire professional career, I have either worked with the EEOC or sought to enforce or improve the statutes it administers--as a career Justice Department litigator in both Republican and Democratic administrations, as a Senate staffer, and in my current role in the Deputy Attorney General's Office at the Department of Justice.

I also have been privileged to work with many of you or your staffs to further the cause of equal opportunity. If confirmed, I hope to continue that important work.

I thank the Committee for your time and look forward to your questions.