

**STATEMENT OF SENATOR PATRICK LEAHY (D-Vt.),  
CHAIRMAN, SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
HEARING ON THE NOMINATION OF LEON RODRIGUEZ  
TO BE DIRECTOR OF UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES  
MARCH 12, 2014**

Today the Senate Judiciary Committee is holding a hearing to consider President Obama's nominee to be Director of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Leon Rodriguez. This office within the Department of Homeland Security is responsible for administering and processing asylum and refugee applications, immigration benefits, and naturalization and visa petitions, including the EB-5 Regional Center Program. This office must have a qualified director at the helm.

Since its inception in 1993, the EB-5 program has spurred capital investment and job creation across the country and particularly in Vermont. Vermont's Regional Center is a national leader in using this federal jobs program. I have seen this program transform regions of the state in extraordinary ways that will have lasting positive impacts for several Vermont businesses. In the way the program has been overseen at the state level and applied throughout the state, Vermont's process has become the gold standard for other states to emulate. Last year the Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously approved my amendment to enact broad improvements to this program during the Committee's consideration of comprehensive immigration reform legislation. This amendment was the product of cooperation with numerous stakeholders, USCIS, and the White House, and I was proud that it drew such strong support. It has now been more than nine months since the full Senate passed historic immigration reform legislation with a strong bipartisan vote of 68-32. The country cannot continue to wait. It is time for the House of Representatives to take up and pass the Senate bill, which included the improvements to EB-5 that I have long sought.

I have met with Mr. Rodriguez and found him to be an excellent candidate to lead such an important division. He has vast leadership and management experience, spanning both public and private practice, and often intersecting with issues of national origin and immigration status. He also understands how important the EB-5 program is to states like Vermont. He understands the challenges facing EB-5, including inexcusably long application processing delays, and he is committed to working with us in Congress to strengthen the program and make it permanent. I applaud President Obama for selecting Mr. Rodriguez and I look forward to advancing his nomination in this Committee and on the Senate floor.

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