

Statement of

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar

United States Senator
Minnesota
November 17, 2010

It is my pleasure to introduce Michele Leonhart to this Committee, and to support her nomination to lead the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Michele grew up in White Bear Lake, Minnesota, and attended Bemidji State University in Bemidji, Minnesota. I am proud that this Minnesota native has been nominated to fill such an important position.

Her career has been filled with "firsts":

? She graduated first in her class from the Baltimore Police Academy in 1978;

? She graduated first in her class at the DEA Training Academy in 1981;

? Then she became the first female agent ever to serve in the DEA's Minneapolis field office, also in 1981;

? And in 1997, she became the first woman to head a DEA field division when she was appointed as Special Agent in Charge in San Francisco.

In fact, the only time the word "second" is used regarding Michele Leonhart is in this context: If confirmed by the Senate, Ms. Leonhart would become the second woman ever to serve as Administrator of the DEA.

Of course, Ms. Leonhart will be familiar with the process of running this very important government institution... she's been the Acting Administrator for the last three years, in addition to continuing to serve as the Deputy Administrator - a position she was unanimously confirmed to by the Senate in 2004.

I hope that she will be confirmed quickly so that she can stop doing double-duty, and focus entirely on the position she has been nominated for now.

Although her resume is impressive, and indicates that she is highly qualified for this job, I also want to mention some other traits of hers.

You see, there are a lot of folks in Minnesota law enforcement who know Ms. Leonhart through her decades with DEA and her early law enforcement career in Minnesota. And when you ask them about Ms. Leonhart and her nomination, they don't talk about her amazing resume... they talk about the other irreplaceable skills she has. For example:

? I heard that she has an absolutely tireless work ethic that inspires everyone around her.

? I heard that she embodies the principle of "leading by example."

? I heard that she works well with law enforcement at all levels - federal, state and local - and that she understands the needs of law enforcement officials in urban and rural areas.

? I heard that throughout her DEA career, even starting out as a field agent, she earned the respect and trust of all the people she worked with because she was honest and a hard worker.

I'm proud to support her nomination, and believe that she is the right woman - the right Minnesotan - the right person for this job.