

Prepared Statement of Nazakhtar (“Nazak”) Nikakhtar

**Nominee for Assistant Secretary, Industry & Analysis,
U.S. Department of Commerce**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Nelson, and members of the Committee, I’d like to thank you for the opportunity to appear here today. I am honored to be considered for the position of Assistant Secretary for Industry & Analysis at the U.S. Department of Commerce.

With me today are my husband, Gene Degnan, and my parents, Manijeh and Bijan Nikakhtar. I’m proud to say that my husband and my parents have served our Government as federal employees for many, many years. My husband served for over a decade at the Department of Commerce, and my parents served for over 40 years collectively as physicians at the VA hospital taking care of our nation’s veterans. My brother, Nersi Nikakhtar, also a physician at the VA hospital, had work obligations and is in Minneapolis today where he resides. I’m proud to be part of a family that honors government service.

I immigrated to America with my family 37 years ago. I can remember from a young age how proud I was to be an American, and how I admired the entrepreneurial spirit of Americans, the innovation, the incredible work ethic, and the thriving industries competing on the international stage. I knew growing up that I wanted to be part of the narrative of American industrial growth, to be part of the engine that drives the American economy forward.

So, I went to school to study law and economics. I obtained my Juris Doctor and Master’s in Economics from Syracuse University in 2002 and then headed to Washington, D.C. with the hope entering public service.

I was fortunate to begin work at the Department of Commerce. I began my career first as an industry analyst at the Bureau of Industry and Security and subsequently at the International Trade Administration. I worked with, and learned from, incredibly smart and talented civil servants there. But, at the agency, I learned firsthand that America's commitment to free and fair trade was not always reciprocated.

I watched U.S. industries struggle to stay alive in the midst of unfair trade. Our industries were eroding, our output was declining, and good, hard-working Americans were losing their jobs because our trading partners were not competing fairly. I've audited these foreign companies; I've witnessed firsthand their business strategies of selling goods at less than fair value in order to capture increased market share. As one foreign company official confessed, underselling was in essence "tuition" to eventually dominate the U.S. market. This experience instilled in me the need for strong enforcement of our trade laws to level the playing field for American companies and workers.

I joined the private sector several years later as a lawyer representing industries in trade remedy disputes – industries in the steel sector, in aquaculture, commodity goods, chemicals, and minerals. I'm well aware of the issues our industries face in being competitive both at home and abroad. I've worked hard, relentlessly, to level the playing field and to save American jobs. That's my commitment to U.S. industries when I return to the Commerce Department.

At Industry & Analysis, my goal will be to ensure that U.S. companies are the most competitive in the world. We have to work on creating greater market access for our manufacturing and services sectors, for our technology companies, and for our small and medium-sized businesses. We have to take a serious look at how to re-shore jobs and how to revitalize job growth in our most economically depressed regions. We have to look at our industries – one by one – to determine what constraints they face in becoming more competitive domestically and globally. This requires robust economic analysis and careful evaluation of trade policy

options. This requires coordination with other government agencies, as well as diplomacy with our trading partners. It involves creative thinking and problem solving.

I came to America knowing that this is the greatest country in the world: the driver of technological innovation, where opportunities are boundless and the American dream is accessible to everyone. I want to make sure that my son – my 15 month old – grows up in a country where he and every American can thrive and succeed, a country that continues to be the world leader in innovation and output.

I want to thank my family for supporting my decision to re-enter public service. And, if confirmed, I look forward to dedicating my time in service to working for American companies, American workers and the U.S. Government to spur economic growth and to create jobs.

I thank you again for the opportunity to be here in front of this Committee. I look forward to your questions.