

**STATEMENT OF SHARON BLOCK  
NOMINEE FOR MEMBER, NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND PENSIONS  
OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE  
MAY 16, 2013**

Thank you Chairman Harkin, Senator Alexander, and members of the Committee. I am so honored and humbled to appear before you as a nominee to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board.

I assure you that I fully appreciate the seriousness of your task in assessing my fitness for the position for which the President has nominated me. I have spent a fair amount of time in this room – sitting behind Senator Kennedy when I served as Senior Labor and Employment Counsel to the Committee or sitting in one of the chairs just behind me in my role as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for Congressional Affairs when Department witnesses testified here. I welcome the same scrutiny of my nomination that I have witnessed in this room of others.

Watching the members of this Committee do their work, I believe, prepared me well for taking on the role of Member of the National Labor Relations Board. My experience working on the MINER Act for the Committee has been particularly instructive for my tenure as a Board member. I first came to work for Senator Kennedy in the wake of the terrible Sago mine disaster. Senators Kennedy, Enzi, Murray, and Isakson recognized the urgency of the need to protect American miners and told us, their staff, to get a bill done to improve mine safety.

I learned from participating in those negotiations many important lessons: the value of considering the perspectives of all stakeholders; the necessity of finding practical solutions that

do more than sound good on paper; and the virtue of principled compromise. No Senator involved in the negotiations got everything he or she wanted in the resulting legislation, but through your hard work, open dialogue, and willingness to compromise you achieved a great bill that has made a difference for workers and employers. I have tried to apply these lessons to my work as a Board Member.

My service as a long-time career attorney at the NLRB also has well prepared me for service as a Board member. I started my career representing management in employment law matters at Steptoe and Johnson. I then came to the Board when my career was still in a formative stage. At the Board, I learned from the most talented and dedicated government attorneys how to represent the public interest.

While I was fortunate to represent the Board in many high profile cases during my earlier tenure at the Board, what made the biggest impact on me were the smaller cases – the cases where the parties have no interest in making law or engaging in ideological debate. Instead, they are the cases where the Board, as a neutral adjudicator, brings resolution to parties who just want to have their voices heard and their views fairly considered.

These are the kind of cases that dominate the Board's docket today as in the past. The overwhelming majority of cases I have participated in as a Board member – serving with both Democrats and Republicans -- have been unanimous decisions that applied long-standing precedent. The importance of these cases cannot be overstated. It is through these cases that the Board fulfills its mission of preserving industrial peace. We bring resolution and repose to the worker who seeks reinstatement after being unlawfully discharged. We affirm the right of an

employer to move forward in running his or her business when the facts show that a genuine impasse in collective-bargaining negotiations exists so the bargaining process will continue.

As you know, there is no private right of action under the Act. Employees, employers and unions are dependent on the Board to ensure that the system for resolving their disputes that Congress created works. So it is incumbent on us to move all cases as efficiently and fairly as possible.

In my experience on the Board, with both Democrats and Republicans, we have done so in a spirit of respectful collegiality. I discuss every case with the career attorneys on my staff, who have both management and labor experience. When I served as senior counsel to former Board Chairman Robert Battista, I always appreciated the frank case discussions he not only allowed, but encouraged. I have continued that tradition with my staff. They know that as a former career attorney, I will never underestimate the value of their contributions.

I would just like to add that being nominated and serving as a Board member is the greatest honor of my professional life. I have been a public servant almost all of my career. The longest span of my service has been as a career civil servant with the Board. When I first came to the Board as a staff attorney, I never dreamed that I would one day be a Board member. When the President asked me to serve, I was surprised, humbled, and awed. This nomination means so much to me because I believe that the mission of the Board means so much to the tradition of fairness and dignity in the American workplace and that a fully confirmed Board is the best way to honor and support that tradition.

In closing, I would like to thank two sets of people here who have been so important to me during the past 17 months. First, my colleagues Mark Pearce and Richard Griffin. The

Board has had no finer members, and I am so grateful for the experience of serving with them, debating with them, and learning from them. I also would like to thank my family who are here with me today, my husband, Kevin Hovland, my children, Charlotte and Eli, my parents, Lois and Joseph Block, and my uncle, Michael Fuchs, for all their love and support.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these opening remarks. I welcome your questions.