

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 13, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President-elect of the United States
Biden-Harris Transition
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Merrick B. Garland
Attorney General Designee
Biden-Harris Transition
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President-Elect Biden and Attorney General Designee:

I write today to provide my strongest recommendation of Jaime Esparza for the position of U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Texas. Mr. Esparza is completing his 28th year as the District Attorney for the 34th Judicial District which includes El Paso, Hudspeth and Culberson counties. I have known Mr. Esparza personally and professionally for over 20 years and throughout that time, he has impressed me with his commitment, leadership, skills, and integrity. I have no doubt that he will serve as an exemplary U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Texas. As the Department of Justice and the Biden your administration looks to rebuild the trust and faith of the American judicial system that has been eroded over the last four years, you we will need individuals with integrity and professionalism that understand the communities that they are tasked to represent.

Mr. Esparza has lived and worked in El Paso most of his life, and as you both know, El Paso has been the epicenter for some of the cruelest policies implemented by the Trump Administration. We were the testing ground for the administration's family separation policy, a policy furthered by the former U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Texas. We were also the site of the deadliest targeted attacks against Latinos in modern American history, an attack of domestic terrorism that took 23 lives, injured 22 and devastated our peaceful community. It would be powerfully fitting for the Western District of Texas to be led by an El Pasoan as we repair the injustices of the last four years.

The Western District covers 68 counties and 92,000 square miles. El Paso handles close to 40 percent of the District's criminal docket. Subsequently, Latinos account for 65% of the State of Texas's population growth, with Latinos soon to be the state's largest population group by 2022. Ensuring that the next U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Texas understands and has a shared life experience as a large part of the state is critical for this position. This geographic region is intricately connected to our southern border through Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Mr. Esparza's commitment to justice, service, and fairness is one of the principal reasons El Paso has been and remains one of the safest cities in the country. He has innovated programs that support both the victims and those accused of crimes. In 2005, he was named Prosecutor of the Year by the State Bar of Texas.

One of his most impactful innovations is his Domestic Violence 24 hour project. This program has received multiple awards, including "The Foundation for Improvement of Justice" in 2013. In 2014, as then Vice President Biden, you highlighted this initiative in a White House report for the "1 is 2 Many" campaign. The Domestic Violence 24 hour project has been used as a model

for prosecutor's offices across the nation. Mr. Esparza has ensured that victims of domestic violence are heard and that their cases, some of the most difficult to prosecute, have the evidence and support they need. He has changed how El Pasoans view domestic violence and made the lives of countless victims and their families better.

From the start of his term as District Attorney, Mr. Esparza has worked to ensure the criminal justice system is fair not only to victims but also those accused of crimes. In 1994, he started the District Attorney Information Management System (DIMS). DIMS dramatically shortens the charging decision and has reduced arrests by 20 percent. DIMS has saved El Paso County millions of dollars. His commitment to fairness has positively impacted all who are touched by the criminal justice system.

In 2015, Mr. Esparza was awarded the National Mothers Against Drunk Driving President's Award - Outstanding Criminal Justice Prosecutor for his leadership and commitment to creating a culture that holds drunk drivers accountable. His leadership in the El Paso District Attorney's office worked to ensure that DWIs are prosecuted appropriately and carefully. Mr. Esparza set the example by personally prosecuting an Intoxication Manslaughter case in 2009. Mr. Esparza is, first and foremost, a trial attorney. Unlike other district attorneys, he continued to personally try criminal cases during his service.

I am particularly impressed with Mr. Esparza's commitment to fairness. In 2011, he created a novel in-house "The Portal" discovery system that automatically shares discoverable evidence with the defense after charging. This program was initiated prior to the landmark Michael Morton decision. Since that time, the Michael Morton case has shown this type of system is necessary. Mr. Esparza understood the importance of discovery and transparency in criminal cases and made sure that El Paso prosecutions were fair and just.

Finally, Mr. Esparza was a founding member and has been the project director for the Border Prosecution Unit of Texas (BPU) since 2009. BPU is charged by the State of Texas to prosecute border crime and train law enforcement and prosecutors in the border region. The BPU comprises 23 elected district attorneys, covers 54 counties in Texas and includes partnerships with the federal government. BPU focuses on the prosecution of border crimes, including human trafficking, gang, and drug cases.

Mr. Esparza has my highest recommendation for the position of U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Texas. I have no doubt that he will carry his commitment to justice, fairness, transparency, and victim rights to that role. Because of his vast and extensive experience working in a border city like El Paso, he is imminently qualified to become the next U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Texas and I highly recommend him for that position.

Sincerely,



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress