

STATEMENT OF PAUL COMPTON
NOMINEE TO SERVE AS GENERAL COUNSEL,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING
AND URBAN AFFAIRS

JULY 18, 2017

Thank you, Chairman Crapo, Ranking Member Brown, and this entire committee for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am honored to have been nominated by the President and, if confirmed, to have the privilege to work with and for Secretary Carson.

I want to begin by introducing my wife of almost 30 years, Dana, and our three children: Catherine, Jerome, and Anne. I also would like to introduce my son in law, Cameron Pulsifer, who is making his first visit to our nation's capital.

Mr. Chairman, when I was in law school at the University of Virginia I had the distinct honor of visiting with Justice Lewis Powell, who had just retired from the Supreme Court and was spending a semester at the law school. When I asked him where I should practice the law, his response was: "Go somewhere you can make a difference."

I followed that advice. I returned to my native Alabama, where I have practiced law with the same firm, Bradley Arant, for 28 years. Back in the early years, as a young attorney, I was initially attracted to the banking area of legal practice. Increasingly, however, I found myself focusing on housing issues. It proved to be a natural fit. I realized I could make a profound difference by using the law to help create shelter and security for vulnerable people while builders and investors reinforced the local economy. So I became more involved in affordable housing — and jumped at the chance when asked to find a way for a local bank to be an equity partner in a planned apartment building to house low-income residents in Tuscaloosa — a novel question at the time. I succeeded — with results that were gratifying — and my career took on a new emphasis.

Over the next several years, I represented that bank in 70 transactions as it grew to become a regional institution, creating more than 5,000 units of affordable housing throughout the southeast United States. Since then, I've worked on

hundreds of affordable housing transactions, with other investors, developers, lenders, and public housing authorities in public-private partnerships that benefitted low-income housing residents. I've often noted that the complexity of transactions goes up exponentially with the number of parties and programs involved. And some of these transactions were indeed enormously complicated, but we almost always found a way to succeed. I encouraged clients to think of themselves as repeat players, to focus on their long-term reputation, and to look for win-win solutions. I think because of that approach, I was tapped to serve as the outside general counsel to the Alabama Affordable Housing Association.

Which brings me to the present day and my nomination to serve as HUD's next General Counsel. As I look back on Justice Powell's advice to me all those years ago, I can't help but think I'm still heeding his words to this very day.

HUD is a place where I can make a difference for our fellow citizens. If confirmed, I will strive each day of my tenure to ensure that the Department and its 8,000 dedicated employees operate in a legal and ethical manner. I will work to apply the law thoughtfully, vigorously and as Congress intended. And I pledge to work with all the members of this committee to find solutions to our nation's housing challenges, and to eliminate barriers to affordable housing.

Mr. Chairman, I'm grateful to this committee for holding this hearing on my nomination, and what I hope are my two future HUD colleagues. I look forward to addressing your questions.