AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Statement on the Senate Filibusters of the Nominations of Miguel A. Estrada and Priscilla Owen To Be Judges on the United States Court of Appeals

May 8, 2003

Miguel Estrada and Priscilla Owen have been waiting 2 years for an up-or-down vote in the Senate. Both of these nominees are of the highest integrity and character with tremendous legal experience. Both have been unanimously rated "well-qualified" by the American Bar Association. Each has the support of a majority of Senators, yet votes on their nominations are being blocked by a minority of Senators who are engaged in simultaneous filibusters. These partisan obstructionist tactics are unprecedented, unacceptable, and inconsistent with the Senate's constitutional responsibility.

Because of the Senate's failure to hold timely votes, the number of judicial vacancies has become unacceptably high. When the Federal courts are understaffed, they cannot act in a timely manner to resolve disputes that affect the lives and liberties of Americans.

Mr. Estrada and Justice Owen represent the mainstream of American law and American values, possess extraordinary experience and integrity, and have strong bipartisan support from those who know them best. They will be outstanding circuit judges once they receive a vote and are confirmed.

In recent days, many Senators of both parties have rightly spoken out about the broken confirmation process and reiterated the need for the Senate to ensure timely consideration of judicial nominees. I appreciate their call for the Senate to fulfill its constitutional responsibility and hold up-or-down votes on all judicial nominees within a reasonable time after nomination.

Executive Order 13299—Interagency Group on Insular Areas

May 8, 2003

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. *Interagency Group on Insular Areas.* (a) There is established, within the Department of the Interior for administrative purposes, the Interagency Group on Insular Areas (IGIA). The group shall consist exclusively of:

(i) the heads of the executive departments; and

(ii) the heads of such agencies as the Secretary of the Interior may designate.

(b) The Secretary of the Interior, or the Secretary's designee under section 1(c) of this order, shall convene and preside at the meetings of the IGIA, determine its agenda, direct its work and, as appropriate to deal with particular subject matters, establish and direct subgroups of the IGIA that shall consist exclusively of members of the IGIA.

(c) A member of the IGIA may designate, to perform the IGIA or IGIA subgroup functions of the member, any person who is a part of the member's department or agency (agency) and who is either an officer of the United States appointed by the President or a member of the Senior Executive Service.

Sec. 2. *Functions of the IGIA.* The IGIA shall:

(a) provide advice on establishment or implementation of policies concerning American Samoa, Guam, the United States Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (Insular Areas) to:

(i) the President, through the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs in the White House Office, in written reports, at least once each year; and

(ii) the Secretary of the Interior;

(b) obtain information and advice concerning Insular Areas from governors and other elected officials in the Insular Areas (including through a meeting at least once each year with such governors of the Insular Areas who may wish to attend) in a manner that seeks their individual advice and does not involve collective judgment or consensus advice or deliberation;

(c) obtain information and advice concerning Insular Areas, as the IGIA determines appropriate, from representatives of entities or other individuals in a manner that