

Statement of Julieta Valls Noyes
Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration
U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee
September 15, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Risch. It is an honor to appear before you as President Biden's nominee for Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees, and Migration. I am grateful to him and to Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me.

I am the first person ever nominated for this position from a refugee background. My parents and members of my extended family entered the United States as refugees from Cuba sixty years ago and later became proud American citizens. Our family is profoundly aware of the debt we owe this great nation. Indeed, I decided to join the State Department to help repay that debt.

When given an opportunity, refugees and vulnerable migrants can become valued contributors to the countries that receive them. My hardworking family members happily give back to this country as taxpayers and engaged citizens. I'm honored to introduce you to one of them today, my mother Julieta Valls. In addition to raising a family, my mom worked in international development for years, presenting the best of America to people in other nations. I am proud to be her daughter. I am also joined by my husband Nick, a retired Foreign Service Officer whose mother also emigrated to America. Our children, Alexandra, Nicholas, and Matthew are watching online. My family's support has enabled me to serve our country; I love and thank them.

In over 35 years as an American diplomat, I have worked to advance human rights, refugee, and migration issues in multiple positions outside of PRM. As Ambassador to Croatia, I presided over the final stages of a U.S.-funded refugee resettlement program and hosted a regional conference on refugees. My mission also ran regional training programs for police, prosecutors, and justice officials, on topics that included supporting the human rights of migrants.

As a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the European Bureau, I managed relations with eleven Western European countries and the European Union, some of our key partners in supporting at-risk populations around the world. As Deputy Chief of Mission at our Embassy to the Vatican, I worked with Church leaders, religious communities, and Catholic aid organizations on issues like combating human trafficking.

While Director for Multilateral and Global Affairs in the Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Bureau, I oversaw international negotiations on human rights resolutions at the United Nations and conducted human rights consultations with many partners. I was a member of the high-level delegations that reported to the United Nations on U.S. compliance with two international human rights treaties: the Convention Against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Earlier in my career, I worked on democracy, human rights, and foreign aid issues in the Western Hemisphere.

I would bring these experiences to bear as PRM Assistant Secretary, and if confirmed, would seek to restore America's leadership on global humanitarian and migration issues.

One of my most urgent priorities would be to help the vulnerable and displaced people of Afghanistan – wherever they may be. Sadly, there are also millions of other vulnerable populations worldwide. Working with partners like USAID, I would prioritize life-saving U.S. humanitarian assistance and protections for people from Syria, Burma, South Sudan, and beyond. I also would advance programs that support maternal health in humanitarian crises and respond to gender-based violence, upholding the Administration's commitment to women's health.

If confirmed I would ramp up engagement with other countries to pursue durable solutions to the problems that lead people to flee their homes, including in our own hemisphere.

Another key PRM priority is to rebuild the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, as directed by the President. If confirmed, I would collaborate with the Departments of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services and work with Congress to ensure the program's success.

It is a testament to the generosity of America that the United States is the largest humanitarian aid donor in the world, but we cannot meet all needs of at-risk populations alone. If confirmed, I would carefully manage the U.S. taxpayer funds that enable PRM's work and urge other nations to share this responsibility more equitably.

I am eager to work closely with PRM's exceptional partners in international and non-governmental organizations, Senate willing, to carry out PRM's mission.

If confirmed, it would above all be a privilege to learn from and lead the hard-working, passionate employees of PRM. Their dedication is inspirational.

Senator Menendez, Senator Risch, members of this committee, my nomination to serve as PRM Assistant Secretary is the greatest professional honor of my life. If confirmed, I would give my all to lead PRM in supporting persecuted and vulnerable people around the world, in keeping with our nation's centuries-long history of compassion and generosity. As the daughter of refugees, I understand that history and responsibility acutely.

Thank you.