

Statement of Shawn Vasell
Before June 22, 2005 Hearing of the
U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs

Mr. Chairman, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I am here today at the Committee's request, with the greatest respect for the important work of this Committee and the Senate itself. I have been called to testify because of my past association with Mr. Jack Abramoff, whose activities are the focus of this Committee's current inquiry. The Committee's staff reached out to me earlier this year and assured me they sought my information solely as a witness to the conduct of others. Given the range of pending investigations and inquiries relating to the work of Mr. Abramoff's government affairs practice, I engaged counsel to guide me toward my goal of providing meaningful and complete cooperation to such efforts. I now feel constrained to follow that guidance. Accordingly, I assert my privilege under the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and decline to respond to questions related to my employment in Mr. Abramoff's group.

I reached that decision reluctantly and with no purpose of impeding the Committee's work. I am persuaded that it is the right decision, however, and I will maintain it in response to any and all questions from the Committee today. In advance of this hearing, my counsel confirmed my position in writing to the Committee, yet I was not excused from this appearance.

Therefore, I yield to the questions of the Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.