

"The principle that needs to be used to guide the spending is, 'How successful is the program?'" Mr. Acosta said.

He pledged to consult with local officials before making cuts to the department. He added that he hoped to help Americans "find good jobs, safe jobs."

Most of the confirmation hearing was given to senators' interrogating Mr. Acosta about how much of Mr. Trump's agenda he would back and how he would help fulfill the president's promises to create jobs and stop companies from moving jobs overseas.

Mr. Trump "ran for president saying he was going to make that huge difference – he was going to bring jobs back," said Senator Michael Bennet, Democrat of Colorado. "What's the plan?"

Mr. Acosta answered that he would work with other agencies, like the Department of Education, in carrying out the president's executive order directing department heads to review regulations.

Two Republican senators, Marco Rubio of Florida and Ted Cruz of Texas, both Cuban-Americans, like Mr. Acosta, introduced and praised him as an example of the American dream.

Senator Lamar Alexander, Republican of Tennessee and the chairman of the committee, said Mr. Acosta would be a labor secretary who "understands how a good-paying job is critical to helping workers realize the American dream for themselves and for their families."

The Senate labor committee is expected to vote next week on whether to advance Mr. Acosta's nomination to the full Senate.

The Senate Agriculture Committee is scheduled to begin a confirmation hearing on Thursday for Sonny Perdue, the former governor of Georgia, to be Mr. Trump's agriculture secretary.

URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/22/us/politics/labor-secretary-alexander-acosta-confirmation.html>

LOAD-DATE: March 23, 2017

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: PHOTO: Alexander Acosta, the president's nominee for labor secretary, told senators he would not favor "any particular constituency." (PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHEN CROWLEY/THE NEW YORK TIMES)

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

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The New York Times

April 12, 2016 Tuesday
Late Edition - Final

Dershowitz and 2 Other Lawyers Settle Legal Fight

BYLINE: By BARRY MEIER

SECTION: Section B; Column 0; Business/Financial Desk; Pg. 2

LENGTH: 425 words

<https://www.lexisnexis.com/dd/delivery/PrntDoc.do?jobHandle=1825:640721064&dnldFil...> 4/30/2018

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