

**Opening Statement
of**

Donald L. Evans

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

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Mr. Chairman, Senator McCain, Members of the Committee.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you this morning. I deeply appreciate the introductions by my long-time friends, Phil Gramm and Kay Bailey Hutchison, and your words of welcome for Susie and me.

Since President-elect Bush announced his intent to nominate me to the position of Secretary of Commerce, I have received nothing but the most gracious welcome here in Washington. Democrats and Republicans, career agency employees, Congressional staff, and the public all have extended warm and helping hands. My meetings over the past two days with many of the Committee members have been particularly helpful to me. I trust this is only the first step in what will be a regular, productive dialogue. As Secretary, I will continue to seek your views and counsel.

Secretary Mineta and his staff have been extraordinarily helpful. Many worked over the holidays to assist our transition team. I am very pleased that Norm will continue his public service as Secretary of Transportation -- and that he will not be able to avoid my calls for his advice. I look forward to continued work with this most esteemed colleague.

I especially wish also to express my gratitude to former Secretary Bill Daley for his assistance and advice. His generosity once again affirms the nature of our democracy - - vibrant and competitive, but also respectful and committed to the common good.

Mr. Chairman, I am humbled and honored that President-elect Bush would nominate me for this new role. And I am eager to take on the challenge.

President-elect Bush has often observed that it is not government, but the entrepreneurial spirit of the American people that creates wealth. What government can do, however, is to help create an environment in which that spirit flourishes - an environment that promotes innovation, risk-taking and equal opportunity.

President-elect Bush clearly understands the challenges of competing in a global economy. But challenges are neither to be avoided nor feared. Americans have never had greater opportunities to pursue their dreams. If confirmed as Secretary, my mission for the Department of COMmerce will be to foster a marketplace where ideas and energy can thrive, where the entrepreneurial spirit indeed will flourish.

I must say that when I worked as a roughneck on drilling rigs some 30 years ago, I never expected to be nominated to become Secretary of the Cabinet agency charged with promoting the nation's business. Nor was I aware of the important training for this role that I was receiving while I worked my way up the chain as an engineer and manager at industrial and energy companies; when I struggled to find a way for my company to survive the severe downturn that hit the oil patch in the late 1980s; or as I chaired the Regents of the University of Texas, a system of nine educational and six health care science centers, having 79,000 employees and 154,000 students. In a sense, I have been preparing for my new responsibilities throughout my working career.

My experience has taught me this: Our free enterprise system is

urn-hatched in its ability to provide economic freedom and opportunity for all of our citizens. If confirmed as Secretary of Commerce, my objective will be to direct the Department's great and diverse resources to the common cause of fostering economic strength at home and abroad. Every part of the Commerce Department will join in this purpose.

Two precepts will guide our work. First, no sector of the U.S. economy operates in isolation from the global economy. Every worker and every employer faces the challenge of competition from the world's farthest reaches. Our job will be to ensure that those challenges are turned into opportunities.

Second, our nation's greatest export is its democratic principles. Those principles best take hold in a world of unshackled economic opportunity. Whether in seeking agreement on rules for e-commerce or the elimination of trade-distorting subsidies, we want to foster a world of private, not government competition.

There thus will be no more important role for the Commerce Department than to partner with the U.S. Trade Representative to ensure that our trade agreements provide meaningful opportunities for exports of American goods and services - trade must never be a one-way street. We must ensure our workers and businesses- small and large, rural and urban- are protected against unfair trade competition, while gaining the great benefits of larger global markets.

Equally important is the proper stewardship of our oceans, fisheries, and marine environment. The research and regulatory roles of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration contribute greatly to our national security and to the livelihoods of our citizens, especially those who live and work in coastal areas.

Fostering America's technological leadership will be a central concern of the Commerce Department under my leadership. American inventiveness is a national treasure. The great inventors of our history,

from Edison and Bell to McCormick and Whitney, would marvel today at the power and reach of American technology and its swift contributions to our standard of living.

The words of Lincoln that are chiseled in stone above remind us of a key mission: It is our patent system, Lincoln noted, that has "added the fuel of interest to the fire of genius."

The nation's security and prosperity rely on the promise of effective intellectual property protection. Maximizing competitive opportunity also results from the establishment of appropriate industrial standards, from the exploitation of new technologies and new means of doing business, and from the predictable, common sense administration of controls on exports of strategically important goods.

The wide range of interests and concerns expressed to me by many of you over the past few days matches the very diversity of the Commerce Department itself. I want you to know that your issues are my issues. Whatever debates there have been previously or may be in the future about the shape and substance of the Commerce Department, I intend simply to make the Department work well for all Americans' workers, businesses, fishermen, inventors, scientists, and consumers alike. I assure the Committee that if I am confirmed as Secretary, the Department of Commerce will pursue our missions with energy, integrity, and constant awareness that we labor in the public interest.

In closing, I want to thank my family for supporting my decision to enter public service, and to express to you again my appreciation for the opportunity to appear before you today. I will be pleased to respond to your questions.