

Ranking Member John Thune
Questions for the Record
Nomination of Robert Simon to be
Associate Director for Environment and Energy,
Office of Science and Technology Policy
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Hearing on September 19, 2013

Senate Experience

- 1) Dr. Simon, how will your experience as a Senate Committee Staff Director, both in the Majority and the Minority, influence how you will perform your job at OSTP?

A1. Thank you for asking this question. One of the things I learned as a Senate Committee Staff Director, both in the Majority and the Minority, was that when you get down to the substantive details on important issues relating to energy and environment, there are usually openings to finding bipartisan common ground. The chance of finding those openings is greatly enhanced if one is listening to and respecting the voices that come from a range of regions, communities, and stakeholders with an interest in a given policy area. In particular, I have found that Members and their staffs from across the political spectrum invariably have useful information and insights to contribute. Listening carefully to that broad input helps one understand the potential real-world effects of any particular proposal. Searching for common ground across party lines is generally the best way to make progress on an issue -- certainly in the Senate, but also in government more broadly. I hope to apply these lessons that I learned in the Senate to the issues I will be responsible for at the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), if confirmed.

STEM program streamlining

- 2) This April, the OSTP and the Office of Management and Budget proposed a federal STEM reorganization plan with the goal of eliminating redundant and ineffective STEM education programs. Members of Congress from both parties have raised concerns about this proposal, claiming that it would eliminate effective programs and that it ignores the expertise and tools that exist within mission agencies like NASA and NOAA.

Question: How would you work with Congress going forward to improve the coordination and efficiencies of these programs across the federal government?

A2. Thank you for this important question. Both the Congress and the Administration share the common goal of improving both the coordination and the efficiency with which the Federal government carries out its activities related to STEM education. The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation has played a leading role in advancing this by authorizing the formation of a committee under the National Science and Technology Council to coordinate

STEM education in the very first substantive section of the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010. This Committee on STEM Education (CoSTEM) has been facilitating planning, coordination, and implementation activities to create a more effective set of Federal STEM education programs. If confirmed, I would stay abreast of Congressional interest in, support for, and perspectives on STEM programs, particularly relating to the program areas of OSTP for which I would have responsibility. I would look forward to working with you and this Congress as we look for the best ways to use Federal STEM education programs to improve STEM education and encourage greater participation in STEM careers.