

**Statement of Julie Brill**

**Nominee, Federal Trade Commission**

**Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation**

**December 15, 2009**

Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison, Committee members: thank you so much for inviting me here and for considering my nomination to the Federal Trade Commission.

I am joined here today by several members of my family, whom I'd like to introduce: My husband, Mark Miller; my sons, Zachary and Noah; my sister, Mimi Brill, my brother-in-law, David Rountree; and my two nieces, Grace and Isobel.

I'd like to thank so many of the Committee members and your staffs for taking time recently to meet with me. I enjoyed our discussions and have already learned much, especially your thoughts about the appropriate goals and direction of the Federal Trade Commission.

I'd also like to thank each of the current Commissioners and particularly the Chairman for their support.

I have spent the past 20 years enforcing the law on behalf of consumers, first in Vermont and more recently in North Carolina. I have been privileged to work with two outstanding Attorneys General—Vermont Attorney General Bill Sorrell and North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper. If confirmed, I will bring to the Commission what they have taught me: passion for aggressively protecting consumers, humility and grace in exercising authority, and the need to carefully balancing the interests and concerns of businesses, consumers, and other stakeholders in legislative, regulatory and law enforcement initiatives.

During our meetings, several of you asked what my top priority as a Commissioner would be. The FTC works on a broad range of issues facing consumers, such as data security, privacy, spyware, energy, and competition in the health care and pharmaceutical industry. I have worked on these critical areas throughout my career, and will continue to do so at the Commission. If confirmed, my top priority will be focusing on economic scams that have been so pernicious to consumers during the economic crisis. These are issues like "get rich quick" scams, foreclosure "rescue" and "assistance" scams, bogus government grant schemes, debt settlement scams, credit repair scams, and unscrupulous debt collection practices.

As you well know, while the financial picture on Wall Street is improving, Main Street continues to suffer. The Mortgage Bankers Association reports that currently more than 14 percent, or 1 in 7 homes, are either in foreclosure or the homeowner has missed at least one mortgage payment. These trends are the worst in the nearly 40 years the MBA has been tracking them. And the downtrend continues: another industry group calculates that nearly 23 percent of all residential mortgages are in a negative equity, or "underwater".

Coupled with high unemployment rates, the economic crisis creates an atmosphere where consumers are vulnerable. Consumers who find themselves with mortgages they cannot afford, with homes that are being foreclosed upon, without jobs, or with involuntarily reduced hours at work – are all particularly vulnerable to unscrupulous business practices that falsely promise to help. Simply put, these consumers have a target on their backs.

The FTC has been cracking down on those who hunt for easy prey. We can build on this work, and focus on the dramatic rise in scams designed to take advantage of consumers' economic insecurity. At the same time, we must continue our efforts to educate consumers so they can better protect themselves by making responsible choices.

The FTC is the Nation's premier consumer protection agency. The State AGs are the FTC's longstanding partners in law enforcement. With my extensive experience with State Attorneys General, I can help build upon the bonds that already exist between these two preeminent law enforcement communities.

I feel truly honored and privileged that you are considering my nomination for the position of Commissioner of the FTC. If I am fortunate to be confirmed, I will be proud to serve and work to protect the Nation's consumers.