

**Opening Statement by Nathaniel F. Wienecke**  
**Nominee for Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs**  
**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
**Before the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee**  
**July 27, 2006**

Chairman Stevens, Co-Chairman Inouye, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is a privilege for me to appear before you today as the nominee to be Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Department of Commerce. I deeply respect the great traditions of the Senate and am both humbled and honored to be considered for this position. I would like to thank President Bush for nominating me, and I am also very grateful to Secretary Gutierrez for supporting my nomination. It is a tremendous honor to work under his leadership at the Department of Commerce.

I would like to introduce my wife, Chantal, and my daughter, Kendall. It is only with their love, support and great sacrifice that I sit before you today, and I am truly grateful for their support. My parents, Paul and Jean Wienecke, are here today, and I would like to recognize them as well. The hard choices they have made for my benefit and that of my siblings are countless. Thank you, Chantal, Kendall, Mom and Dad for your unwavering support.

I would also like to commend the career staff of the Department of Commerce. They are dedicated, professional and always up to the task. The American people are better off for their service. Additionally, Chairman Stevens and Co-Chairman Inouye, I would like to commend the

Commerce Committee staff – it is a pleasure to work with them. They focus on the details and are forceful advocates for your legislative priorities.

Mr. Chairman, I firmly believe that America’s strength lies in the ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit of its citizens. Serving at the Department of Commerce, where our mission every day is to “foster, promote, and develop the foreign and domestic commerce” of the United States is a distinct honor and privilege. If confirmed, I pledge to continue working in partnership with you and the Committee to address the concerns and needs of the American public. Over the past five years, I have served in a variety of positions at the Department and have had the opportunity to work with our incredibly diverse portfolio, managed by 12 bureaus and under the oversight of 21 different Congressional committees.

During my tenure at the Commerce Department, I have had the opportunity to work with almost every member of the Senate and House and most of our nation’s governors. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with our stakeholders to provide them timely and accurate information about the Department’s programs and policies. I will do so fairly and without regard to position or party. As a former Congressional aide, I understand that the livelihood, quality of life or bottom line of your constituents can be affected by the Department’s responsiveness to your inquiries on their behalf.

The issues faced by your constituents vary greatly across America. Whether the unique challenges faced by Alaskan Natives, the treasured ecosystem of Hawaii, or the reinvigoration of the Gulf Coast, each state and each region has its own unique needs. I am committed to helping

you address them. Programs at the Department of Commerce affect people personally—whether it be promoting economic development in distressed communities, enforcing our trade laws, or helping small businesses protect their newest innovations, there are no small or unimportant issues.

If confirmed by the Senate, there are three priorities on which I will focus:

First, I will be a strong advocate for the Administration’s legislative priorities that are before the Congress. Whether it the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, promoting the President’s American Competitiveness Initiative, or advancing legislation to open markets around the world to U.S. goods and services, I will provide the Congress with the information it needs to craft legislation and oversee the Department’s activities.

Second, I will ensure that the Department’s legislative staff meets often with yours to ensure that we understand your priorities. There is no substitute for face-to-face interaction in the disposition of complex issues.

Third, I will work to implement three key information technology improvements to better our ability to communicate with members’ offices. Specifically, we must improve the means by which we notify members’ offices of grants and contracts that affect your respective states. We must also improve the methods we use to share the wealth of economic and statistical data that we produce. And finally, we need to continue to improve the means by which we ensure that inquiries from members of Congress are responded to in a timely manner.

I look forward to assisting Secretary Gutierrez by serving as a conduit to share his views and objectives with the Congress and relay your concerns back to the Department. In addition, I am committed to keeping the lines of communication open with state and local governments on issues of importance to them.

If I am fortunate enough to be approved by this Committee and confirmed by the Senate, I will ensure that the Department responds to your questions as quickly as possible with the best information that is available.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.