

Statement by Earl F. Weener
Nominee for Member, National Transportation Safety Board
Before the
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
March 18, 2010

Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Minority Member Hutchison, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, I am pleased and honored to appear before you today as you consider my nomination to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). I am grateful to Senator McConnell for proposing my selection and to President Obama for nominating me to serve the nation in this position. I would also like to thank Senator Merkley from my home state of Oregon for his support and generous introduction. If confirmed, I intend to work with the utmost diligence to contribute to the Safety Board's mission of preventing transportation accidents and incidents, and to maintaining the trust and confidence of the traveling public in our transportation system.

Before going further, I would like to introduce several people who are very special to me. First, I would like to introduce my wife, best friend, and most ardent supporter, Linda Weener, who is present with me at this hearing. My daughter, Julia Robinson, and her husband, Geoffrey, are viewing this from Colorado. My son, Jeffrey, and his wife, Katrina, are viewing this from my home town, Sherwood, Oregon. My mother, Marcia Weener, is viewing this hearing from Michigan. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support and encouragement of retired Executive Vice President of the Flight Safety Foundation, Robert Vandell, a long time colleague and collaborator in promoting aviation safety enhancing activities for more than two decades.

Let me briefly discuss my qualifications and experience as they relate to being a Member of the National Transportation Safety Board. I have been actively involved in advancing safety, more specifically, aviation safety, for more than four decades as a private citizen, as a participant and technically trained professional in the commercial or private sector and as an active professional and consultant, educator and advocate in the not-for-profit sector. As an individual, at the

beginning of my aviation career, I flew as an Air Taxi pilot and endeavored to teach people to fly airplanes safely. I continued as a flight instructor throughout my college days to the present.

During my nearly quarter century career with The Boeing Company, I was involved in assignments that included developing the flight crew interface of the Boeing 767 and 757 flight decks, as well as the preliminary development of the modifications to the 747 that lead to a modern two-crew flight deck. During the mid 1980's, I was involved, as an employee of Boeing, in government affairs in this city, and, in that capacity, dealt extensively with aviation safety issues. During the latter portion of my private sector career with Boeing, I was chief engineer for areas that included airplane safety, safety technology development, and related engineering executive assignments across all the Boeing commercial airplanes. It was during this time that I initiated the effort to prevent Controlled Flight into Terrain (CFIT) and approach and landing accidents, which through the auspices of the Flight Safety Foundation, became an international safety task force.

During the past decade, following my retirement from Boeing, I have continued to be active in the area of aviation safety and have worked with the Flight Safety Foundation to develop and lead two international programs focused on enhancing ground safety and runway safety. More recently, I was involved in leading the Flight Safety Foundation Runway Safety Initiative, an effort focused on preventing runway excursions, which were involved in approximately 30% of the commercial air transport accidents world-wide over the past decade and a half.

The overarching role of the NTSB is to promote safety through its recommendations. Preventing accidents requires that the Board, through its investigations, accurately identifies the probable causes of accidents, and communicates these findings in a manner that they are understood. The NTSB is the nation's preeminent accident investigation agency and its expertise in transportation safety is recognized throughout the world. It is by Congressional design, an independent agency and is not part of any regulatory authority. That independence allows the Board to conduct unbiased investigations into transportation accidents. An equally important role of the Board is that of safety advocacy, to disseminate knowledge that will lead to the prevention of accidents and advance the recommendations of the Board.

I believe that my transportation safety experience in commercial transport aircraft design, development and operation; in industry association and government affairs; and in international safety programs have all prepared me for this opportunity to serve the public and advance transportation safety. I believe my experience and expertise complement the experience and expertise currently resident in the Board. If confirmed as a Member of the NTSB, I will do my utmost to maintain the preeminence of the Board. If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to serve the American public as a Member of the NTSB.

I look forward to addressing any questions you may have.