

Testimony of Michael Huerta  
Acting Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration  
Nomination Hearing  
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation  
Washington, D.C.  
June 21, 2012

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Thank you, Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison and members of the committee. It's an honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee for Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration.

I am humbled by this nomination and the opportunity to serve our nation. I'd like to thank Secretary LaHood for his leadership and support, and also recognize my family who is with me today – my wife Ann and my son Matthew.

At the Federal Aviation Administration we operate the largest and safest aviation system in the world. The safety of the traveling public is our number one priority and our mission. We are constantly working to identify and address potential risks long before there is a problem. We have achieved a greater level of collaboration with our workforce and are always enhancing our safety culture.

Congress has helped in our efforts by passing the FAA reauthorization earlier this year. I want to thank the members of this committee for their role in this major accomplishment. The reauthorization gives the dedicated employees of the FAA greater financial guidance and it gives greater stability to our programs.

All of this is vital to keeping the economic engine of civil aviation at full capacity. It helps expand on the 10 million jobs and 1.3 trillion dollars that civil aviation already contributes to the American economy each year. Thank you again.

Now, I would like to share a little about my background with you today.

I have spent my entire career in transportation with rewarding professional experiences in both the public and private sectors. I held senior policy positions at the U.S. Department of Transportation under President Clinton. There, I gained valuable insight into the day-to-day operations of many federal agencies, including the FAA.

Later, I was a managing director for transportation with the Salt Lake Olympic Committee. This experience taught me that an immovable deadline can be extremely powerful in motivating and in focusing a team toward a common objective.

More recently, in the private sector, I led a large transportation technology services company. I managed the operations of a global organization and a diverse and technical workforce, to ensure that we met our financial targets. I came to develop a great appreciation for the benefits of mission-focused partnerships between government and business.

Two years ago I returned to the federal government, where I have had the opportunity to serve as Deputy Administrator of the FAA, and now, as Acting Administrator. I am honored that President Obama has nominated me to lead this great agency.

In the last two years I have focused on positioning the FAA to deliver NextGen – the Next Generation Air

Transportation System. We recently established a new organization within the agency to focus on implementing major technology programs. This will improve the coordination among NextGen initiatives, helping us usher them from the drawing board to live operation.

What we do over the next several years is going to determine the course of aviation in this country for decades to come. That is why it is critical that the FAA work closely with Congress, other government agencies, all the components of the aviation industry, and the communities they serve, as we lay the foundation for the future.

NextGen is the total transformation of the way we handle air traffic here and around the world. We are moving from radar to satellites, from radios to data messages and from airways that zig-zag the country to more direct routes. We need public-private collaboration to create this new way of doing business.

NextGen means enhanced safety, greater access to airports, a smaller impact on the environment and more

predictable schedules for travelers. And we're already seeing these benefits in metro areas around the country now.

As we move forward, I have asked my senior leadership to focus on three main areas this year. First, we need to make the safest aviation system in the world even safer and smarter. Second, we need to realize even more benefits from NextGen today. And third, we need to make sure that we empower our 48,000 FAA employees to embrace innovation and to work efficiently.

Mr. Chairman, I am honored by the trust the President has placed in me as his nominee. If confirmed, I pledge to continue to enhance the safety of our system for the traveling public and to guide the FAA through the many challenges that lie ahead.

I would like to thank this Committee again for its consideration of my nomination, and I look forward to continuing a close working relationship. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.