

**Prepared Statement of William J. Brennan
Nominee for Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere
United States Department of Commerce
May 1, 2008**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, Members of the Committee,

I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the next Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. I am grateful and honored that the President has given me this opportunity to continue serving the American people, and I am deeply appreciative of the confidence and support shown to me by Secretary Gutierrez and Under Secretary Lautenbacher. I would also like to thank this Committee and its staff for the courtesies they have extended to me throughout this process.

Mr. Chairman, I would not be here today were it not for my family and I would like to acknowledge them — their support and encouragement has sustained me over the years and I wish to recognize and thank my wife Heather and daughter Hayley who are with me today and my sons Will and Tyler who could not join us but who are with me in spirit.

Let me begin by stating my strong commitment to the core mission of the Department, namely, to serve the American people by helping to create the right conditions for economic growth and expanded opportunity. The Commerce Department and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) address a wide range of important challenges each and every day. Our work takes place on a global basis — from marine fisheries and the weather service to other numerous scientific, environmental, technological, and economic endeavors.

The Department's Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere serves as NOAA's Deputy Administrator, helping to oversee its 12,500 employees and \$4 billion budget. Indeed, one of the Assistant Secretary's important roles is to serve as the NOAA Administrator's primary advisor and surrogate and as an advocate for NOAA's programs in the development of the President's budget. With the support of this Committee, and the hardworking men and women of the NOAA, I am confident I can maintain the high standards set by my predecessors and support Secretary Gutierrez's commitment to excellence.

If confirmed by the Senate, I would bring valuable experience and knowledge to the office of Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere. For the past six years, I have served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Affairs — providing vision and strategic management of NOAA's \$100 million international program and special projects related to weather and water, ecosystem and marine resource management, commerce and transportation, and climate services. For two of the past six years I have also served in an acting capacity as the Director of the Climate Change Science Program, managing the interagency effort that integrates the planning of and \$2

billion budget for federal climate and global change activities of 13 federal scientific agencies.

I began my career in the Merchant Marine and as a commercial fisherman. Through that experience, I realized a love of the ocean, of the things that live in it and are supported by it, and in the rigors of a life associated with making a living from it. In the three decades since I took my first job with NOAA as a GS-5 technician at the National Marine Fisheries Service laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, I have dedicated myself to environment and natural resource stewardship. I have served as a Legislative Assistant in the U.S. House of Representatives working on fisheries and environmental issues. I have been a Cabinet Officer heading the State of Maine's Department of Marine Resources. I have worked in the private sector providing environmental policy advice to private and public sector clients. And, I have been a college professor, teaching and mentoring students in the field of ocean governance and resource management.

Over the years, I have been in and out of government as an employee of NOAA, a NOAA contractor, a NOAA partner during my time as a member of the New England Fishery Management Council, and as a customer of NOAA when I was a state cabinet official. For the last several years, I have been part of NOAA's senior leadership and I have been privileged to help VADM Lautenbacher work to transform the agency into a cohesive enterprise. In these varied roles, I believe I have developed the skills and experience necessary to address the challenges and opportunities facing NOAA. I also recognize that I have much to learn about facets of the Agency that I have not worked with on a regular basis. As I look forward to this continued education, I know that I will be well supported by the deep and talented staff of career employees and other professionals within NOAA. I am confident that, with their support, I will perform my duties with the skill and professionalism that the public, expects and deserve.

If confirmed, there would be no more significant honor and cap stone to my career than to serve as the Deputy Administrator of NOAA and let me conclude by stating that it is my firm conviction that stewardship through public service is a special privilege and responsibility. If confirmed, I will commit my utmost energies, integrity, and devotion to serving the American people. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today, and for your consideration of my nomination.

I would be pleased to respond to any questions that you may have for me.