



Statement of Senator Peter Welch

Before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Nomination of Michael Whitaker to be Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Hearing

Wednesday, October 4, 2023

Madam Chair, you gave an excellent presentation of Mr. Whitaker's experience, but you left out one very important fact: He's my neighbor, lives down the dirt road...

It's wonderful to have Michael here, Mary, and Joe. You did outline his public experience and private experience, and I was going to do that, but you've done it so well that I don't think we need to add to it.

But I do want to say a couple of things: With this extraordinary experience he has, first as a pilot—a lifelong pilot—and with that, a constant concern about safety, because he's had people he loves in his own plane.

With his experience at the FAA, where you have this huge important agency, and he had the responsibility to make it work in the implementation of the very important program that you mentioned.

And then with his experience in the private sector with United Airlines and the very responsible big jobs that he had there; how can you have more experience in every phase of what's required to have our flight systems be safe, to have performance be solid, and to have the managerial experience to create the team and the culture that's necessary for a well-functioning FAA?

That's something that he and I spoke about at Dan and Whit's, which is a store where if they don't have it you don't need it, the Norwich famous country store.

So, that broad depth of experience in that decision—and this is what I also appreciate—at a time in his life when he was doing fine, he lives at a nice place...he wanted to serve. And we so need that in this country, to have people with the benefit of a lifelong career in the public and private sector deciding, 'You know what, I want to serve.'

So, that gives me just immense confidence that we're going to have a tremendous director, and I yield back.