

*Statement of Larry Robinson*

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*Nominee for Assistant Secretary of Commerce  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Nomination Hearing before the Senate Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation Committee*

*March 18, 2009*

Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison, and honorable members of this Committee, it is with great humility and honor that I sit before you as President Obama's nominee for Assistant Secretary of Commerce at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. I would like to thank Secretary Locke and Under Secretary Lubchenco for their gracious support of my nomination.

While I am humbled by this nomination, I can only imagine the pride that my grandparents and my mother, Eliza Mae Robinson, in particular would exude if they were still with us to witness this occasion. Perhaps on one of those 4:00 a.m. drives as I took my mother to work we talked about this possibility and why upon my return home I should take advantage of the solitude and advance my undergraduate pursuits. I am eternally indebted to her for all of the sacrifices she made for me in preparation for this moment.

I owe a tremendous debt to my immediate family beginning with my daughters Nicole, Arlin and Talia and my niece, Patricia Robinson-Brown, who my wife and I raised, and who, coincidentally is now stationed nearby at Andrews Air Force Base in the U.S. Coast Guard. And to Sharon, my wife of 25 years, thank you for your friendship, wise counsel and dedication.

I must thank the entire Florida A&M University family for adopting me into its wonderful community of scholars and leaders dedicated to the principle of "Excellence with Caring".

In particular I must thank President James H. Ammons, former Presidents Fred Gainous, and Frederick S. Humphries for allowing me to serve in key leadership positions at the University including Director of the Environmental Sciences Institute, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and currently Vice President for Research. I must also thank Dr. Ammons and our Board of Trustees Chairman, Mr. William Jennings for encouraging me to pursue this opportunity.

My perspective on conservation and management issues has been shaped by service on advisory bodies including those with national scope such as the National Ecological Observatory Network's Science Technology and Education Advisory Committee, and the Oceans Research and Resources Advisory Panel; and those with a regional or local focus such as the Department of Energy's Oak Ridge Operations Site Specific Advisory Board, the Florida Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, and the Leon County, Florida Water Resources Committee.

During the past few weeks, I have met with members of the leadership teams at the Department of Commerce and NOAA and various members of your staff which has allowed me to witness a spirit of collaboration that most certainly will allow us to continue to find creative ways to address the complex issues confronting NOAA and the Nation regardless of their difficulty. I welcome the opportunity to advance these traditions even further.

This spirit of collegiality and cooperation has been critical to the success of my professional endeavors including leadership of NOAA's multi-institutional Environmental Cooperative Science Center (ECSC) since 2001 which conducts research on ecological and human dynamics in coastal ecosystems from the Texas Gulf of Mexico to Delaware Bay.

Since 1997, I have served as FAMU's Florida Sea Grant Coordinator, which has allowed me to obtain a "grassroots" perspective of NOAA-related issues in Florida and the region.

Four years of service on the National Research Council's Committee on the Restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem allowed me to provide input to one of the Nation's most expansive and comprehensive ecosystem restoration projects.

My tenure on the Ocean Research and Resources Advisory Panel has fostered a deeper understanding of NOAA and its relationship to other agencies and organizations with missions and goals.

My appreciation for how we can improve the work of federal agencies by garnering input from external stakeholders was bolstered during my tenure as Chief Science Advisor for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service as this agency prepared for its transformation to the National Institute for Food and Agriculture.

Finally, my own research and faculty responsibilities have contributed to the dissertation research projects of Ph.D. recipients from Florida A&M University who are currently employed at NOAA in the National Marine Fisheries Service, National Ocean Service, and Oceanic and Atmospheric Research.

Through these collective experiences and others, I have come to know and appreciate the Department of Commerce and NOAA and their responsibilities and

resources very well. These resources include talented and dedicated people inside and outside of government whose work and actions impact our lives on a daily basis. Their work can often help us peer into the future.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed as Assistant Secretary of Commerce, I will work collaboratively with this Committee, and Congress to ensure that the full capacity of our assets are utilized to meet our responsibility to manage the resources entrusted to us and arrive at a future defined by our collective vision that is in the best interest of this Nation.

Thank you for your attention. I welcome any questions you might have.