

Opening Statement
Joe Gruters
Nominee for Amtrak Board of Directors
United States Senate
Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee
Washington, D.C.
May 16, 2018

Thank you, Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to appear before you as the President's nominee to serve as a member of the Amtrak Board of Directors. I also want to thank President Trump for the confidence he has placed in me with this appointment and I would like to thank Congressman Rooney for his willingness to introduce me and for the kinds words.

I also absolutely must thank my wife, Sydney, and my family. Without their support and help, I would not be in this position today.

For nearly half a century, through good times and bad, Amtrak has endeavored to be seen as a symbol of America's ability to get around safely and quickly.

I would like to be a part of the team that adds a "third rail" to this reputational vocabulary: "economically".

Currently, I am a small business owner in Sarasota, Florida where I employ 7 people in two different offices. I have an MBA and work hard to help small and medium size companies and their owners keep more of what they earn. I work on both the tax and audit side of accounting and have experience working on Government audits. My experience and background is grounded in making the numbers work, where we try to maximize investment by generating optimal results.

I believe Amtrak has an opportunity to do the same.

Like President Trump, I believe in the possible, and am willing to fight for it

I have been involved in public service and public policy since I was in college at Florida State University. I've long had a passion for pursuing good government, efficient government, accountable government. I have had the opportunity to serve my community and State in numerous positions including as Chairman of the Sarasota Planning Commission, on the Board of the Florida Sports Foundation, as treasurer of the Sarasota County Humane Society and as a State Representative where I have served on the Joint Auditing Committee as well as the Commerce and numerous Commerce Sub-Committees.

And so I treasure this opportunity to put my experience and passion to work on behalf of the Amtrak ridership and the American people

Amtrak's mission is "Delivering intercity transportation with superior safety, customer service and financial excellence."

My time on governing boards of large, governmental institutions provide me with strong experience to start quickly in this position. This experience includes serving as the Finance and Audit Chairman while a member of the Board of Trustees of Florida State University. The annual budget exceeded \$1.7 billion and the university was ranked the most efficient in the country while I was a member of the Board and Chairman of the Finance and Audit Committee. I would bring this experience and a keen eye to the Amtrak Board to ensure appropriate oversight.

I recognize the need to continue to improve Amtrak's economic effectiveness, enhance the safety of our passenger rail lines, maintain the modernization of our products and to continue to bolster our operational efficiencies. For that, we need to ensure accountable management and accounting controls policies from the Board.

Safety will be my top priority as a member of the Amtrak Board of Directors. Tragic Amtrak accidents over the past several months in South Carolina, Virginia, and Washington state, highlight the need for a greater focus on safety. I look forward to working with the Board of Directors and Amtrak leadership on ways to strengthen the railroad's safety, particularly at rail-grade crossings across the network.

As a Board Member, I will work to support any and all efforts to ensure that Positive Train Control is fully implemented on Amtrak by the deadlines set forth by Congress.

We have some serious challenges ahead in ensuring the safest, most reliable, and efficient operations of Amtrak for the American people. I look forward to being able to utilize my experience in government and the private sector to work on the Board to ensure this happens.

I again want to thank President Trump for this opportunity to serve the country. And I want to thank the committee for considering my nomination.

