

Statement by Christopher A. Hart
Nominee for National Transportation Safety Board Member
before the
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
July 29, 2009

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Hutchison, and other Members of this Committee for the opportunity to appear before you today in relation to my nomination by President Obama to serve as a Member of the National Transportation Safety Board. Being nominated by President Obama for this important position, one that has such a tremendous influence on transportation safety, is certainly a privilege and an honor.

Congress, in its wisdom, created the NTSB as an independent agency to conduct objective, impartial investigations of transportation mishaps in all modes of transportation, determine the causes, and make recommendations to avoid recurrences -- all with a singular focus on improving safety. This process has resulted in innumerable safety improvements over the years. Indeed, the NTSB has performed its functions so well that it is viewed around the world as the gold standard in accident investigation.

Although the NTSB's perspective is obviously different than that of regulatory agencies, by Congress' design, the ultimate goals are the same -- improving transportation safety. In creating this type of relationship between the NTSB and the regulatory agencies, Congress developed a structure for improving safety that has been admired both by other industries in the United States and by governments all over the world.

Having previously had the honor of serving at the NTSB, and having also been in transportation safety regulatory agencies since 1994 -- first at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and then at the Federal Aviation Administration -- I have acquired a strong base of knowledge and experience upon which to help assure that the relationship between the NTSB and the regulatory agencies, while always reflecting their inherently different roles and missions, is optimal for the purpose of the ultimate goal of improving transportation safety.

Over the last 20 years, there have been many technology and process improvements in transportation. As an attorney with a Master's Degree in Aerospace Engineering, as well as a 3000-hour pilot, one of the areas that I hope to explore, if confirmed, is how these advances can be more effectively employed to help prevent transportation mishaps.

Before closing, I would like to thank my co-workers and other friends who are here today to share this experience with me, and I would also like to thank my biggest supporters, my wife, LeeAnn, my daughter, Brooke, and my son, Adam, who was not

able to join us today, for all they have done to help me be in a position to take advantage of this opportunity to serve the American people.

Thank you again for the privilege of appearing before you today. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee on the important transportation safety issues before the NTSB. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.