

**TESTIMONY OF
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OF COMMERCE FOR OCEANS AND ATMOSPHERE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES SENATE
SEPTEMBER 19, 2013**

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I am honored to come before you today as President Obama's nominee for Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. I would also like to thank Secretary Pritzker and Acting Deputy Secretary Gallagher for their support of my nomination.

I am happy to have the support of my friends and family that are here with me today. Also with me in spirit are my late father and mother, who nurtured in me my curiosity of the natural world, my sense of adventure and exploration and my commitment to helping others understand our planet.

When I was six my family moved to California, and the open spaces of the San Fernando Valley became my playground. Our family's flying and fishing trips kindled in me an interest in the air we flew through, the streams we fished in and the ground we stood upon. My deep connection with the oceans came later – during a required natural sciences course, at the University of California, Santa Cruz. My plan, until that fateful semester, was to use a knack for foreign languages to explore the world. What I didn't know at the time was that that marine biology class would lead me down a path of exploration – first as an oceanographer, then as an astronaut, and finally to NOAA. My teachers were not just doing science for science's sake. They knew our planet like it was their own backyard, and they were using their understanding to solve real world problems. They were explorers and problem solvers all in one. And I knew instantly what I wanted to do with my career.

I joined NASA in 1978 as part of the eighth class of shuttle astronauts - the first to include women. No words can describe the awe of looking down on our blue planet from space. It is a singular experience, and one I treasure. It is also a key experience that led me here to NOAA.

I first joined NOAA immediately upon my return from my third Shuttle flight, as a nominee of George H.W. Bush and, subsequently, as an appointee of President Clinton's to the role of Chief Scientist. I was drawn to NOAA because our mission is to observe, forecast, and interpret complex earth systems for the benefit of our people and communities. While NOAA is not alone in conducting earth science, our commitment to provide that information to the American public as useful "services" sets us apart. NOAA is the nation's source of the critical and timely environmental intelligence that is essential to ensure our communities are safe, resilient, sustainable, and prosperous.

My time at NASA taught me a lot about myself, organizations and earth systems, but it was at NOAA that I learned how to bring that knowledge to bear to solve real problems our citizens, businesses and leaders face each day. These experiences have left me with three lessons that will guide me as NOAA Administrator, if confirmed.

First, I've learned that it's not enough to just understand our planet. We must bring that knowledge to bear to solve the real problems our citizens, businesses, and leaders face every single day. That is exactly what NOAA does. We transform scientific data into actionable environmental intelligence that can help us live wisely and well on this dynamic planet. You know this as the weather forecasts that protect lives and livelihoods from storms like Hurricane Sandy, or that alert Midwest communities months in advance to coming floods. But it's also the nautical charts and navigation data that allow cargo to move safely through our ports; the climate data behind plant hardiness zones; the harmful algae bloom forecasts that allow local communities to keep beach goers and shellfish farms safe; the solar storm forecasts that allow utilities to safeguard our electric grid; and the stock assessments that set sustainable levels of catch in our nation's fisheries. All of that is NOAA. So too are the observational platforms – our satellites, radars, buoys, ships and aircraft – that create and sustain the flows of data which underpin our ability to provide this critical environmental intelligence. If confirmed, a central focus of mine will be to insure the scientific integrity and quality of this intelligence are sustained and to engage closely with stakeholders to guarantee we're delivering the most needed services in effective ways.

NOAA is an agency that has staff working in each and every state with constant operations that demand efficiency and sound guidance. This brings me to my second point. My service in the Shuttle Program, 18 years in the US Navy Reserve, and experience at NOAA have taught me a great deal about the importance of operational rigor. The breadth, depth, and critical nature of NOAA's operational missions are central to our strength and value as an agency. We are at sea with our fishermen and on the docks when they come home, ensuring our fisheries are sustained today and into the future. Our weather forecasters are on the front lines with first-responders and emergency managers when extreme weather strikes, providing lifesaving forecasts and warnings. Our Office of Response and Restoration provides spill trajectories for oil and chemical spills, and our satellite operators never take their eye off the ball, ensuring we have the real-time data we need, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Members of the NOAA Corps clear ports of debris and ensure safe navigation after major storms and deploy buoys essential for detecting tsunamis before they reach shore. Our team at the National Integrated Drought Information System works with water managers and farmers to help them adjust to drought conditions. The people of NOAA rise to the challenge every day. I understand how to lead operational teams, and I will ensure that NOAA operations are efficient and at-the-ready if confirmed as NOAA Administrator.

Third, an effective organization needs strong leadership and management from the top. I have significant management experience with organizations of various scales in the non-profit, corporate and Federal government sectors. For nearly a decade, I led Ohio's Center of Science & Industry (COSI) through a major transformation that included the design and construction of a new facility and total re-design of all operating systems and business processes. Most aspects of

the transformation were achieved by making the most of internal expertise mobilized in project teams that I formed, supervised, and integrated. Creative and effective management is needed throughout the federal government, and I firmly believe I will bring that to NOAA. I have also served as an independent corporate director on the boards of several Fortune 500 companies. This service allowed me to study closely a variety of large-enterprise business process and management models, and provided me with practical insights that continue to inform my own management practices. If confirmed, I will apply my years of management experience to provide the support that NOAA employees need to deliver on our mission. I believe in, and will ensure that NOAA has strong, transparent and forward-looking business practices. And I will make it a priority to make the investments and changes needed to ensure NOAA is a well-managed agency.

I am immensely proud to be nominated for this position because I believe, at its core, NOAA is government at its best. If given the opportunity, I will work every day with the dedicated public servants at NOAA, our key stakeholders - including you, members of this committee - and the communities we serve to provide the critical environmental intelligence our citizens, businesses, coastal communities and public leaders need to address the questions and challenges they face every single day. You can count on me to focus on the management and leadership questions that matter to meeting this mission.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and for your consideration of my nomination. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.