

Opening Statement by Dr. Mark E. Doms

Nominee for Under Secretary for Economic Affairs

U.S. Department of Commerce

Before the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee

December 4, 2012

Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison, and distinguished members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today as the nominee for the position of Under Secretary for Economic Affairs at the Department of Commerce. It is an honor to be nominated for Under Secretary by President Obama, and if confirmed I look forward to working with Acting Secretary Blank and others in leadership at the Department of Commerce. I also look forward to working with Congress, and especially this committee, in the years to come. I believe the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs to be a vital agency job, and I am grateful for the privilege of being considered for this position.

The Under Secretary job, which is housed in the Economics and Statistics Administration (ESA), has two key functions. The first is management and oversight of two of the top statistical agencies in the United States, the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). The second part of the job is to provide high-quality economic analysis to the Department, Administration, and the public.

The management and oversight responsibilities for the Census Bureau and BEA are vitally important. As you know, the Census Bureau is responsible for conducting the decennial census, the largest peacetime operation of the federal government. In fact, although it may seem early to do so, the Census Bureau is well underway in planning the 2020 Census, which we hope to be the best managed, most efficient and cost effective census ever. What may be a surprise to some, the Census Bureau also does an Economic Census of businesses in the US, which is currently underway. In addition, the Census Bureau does a vast amount of data collection that gives us vital statistics that are used by businesses, federal, state, local and tribal governments to manage and grow the economy. BEA provides other economic data, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), personal income and outlays, and trade in goods and services.

If confirmed as Under Secretary, I will work with these agencies to continue to provide the American people greater and easier access to the best, most accurate information about our economy and our communities.

The second part of the Under Secretary's job is to serve as the key economic advisor to the Secretary of Commerce, providing in-depth economic analysis on current issues. In fact, the economics team in ESA, of which I am a part of, worked closely with others to draft the COMPETES report that was delivered earlier this year to this committee. The COMPETES report is comprehensive report on the competitiveness and innovative capacity of the United States and highlights bipartisan priorities to sustain and promote American innovation and economic competitiveness.

ESA also produced reports on the middle class, women-owned businesses in the 21st century, IP-intensive industries and broadband adoption. What ESA does informs the Secretary on a daily basis, but also provides a data-driven perspective on economic issues relevant in the department's economic recovery efforts. If confirmed as Under Secretary, I will continue to ensure that the Department, the American people, the Administration, and the Congress have access to cutting-edge economic analysis.

The main responsibilities for the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs closely align with my past professional experiences. I pursued my Ph.D. in economics as a result of my desire to bridge the gap between data analysis and policy development. My research has mainly focused on how forces, especially technological change, affect our economy, most notably in the areas of productivity growth and wages.

I began my professional work in economics at the Census Bureau, learning the intricacies of data, observing first-hand the challenges in collecting and subsequently using data. After leaving the Census Bureau, I spent the bulk of my career working in the Federal Reserve System. During that time I observed first-hand how the data collected by our statistical agencies guides how we understand the macro economy. While at the Federal Reserve, I interacted frequently with the staffs of Census and BEA. Also while at the Federal Reserve, I learned how to produce a primary economic indicator, the index of industrial production, which measures the output of our nation's factories, utilities, and mines.

My most rewarding professional experience has been serving as the Department of Commerce's Chief Economist, a position that reports directly to the Under Secretary of Economic Affairs. In addition to my analytical work, I have had the opportunity to become intimately familiar with major issues facing our agency and bureaus. These issues include budgeting and management in a time of fiscal restraint; data collection for a growing, increasingly mobile population; and communicating to the public the commitment we have to data security, cost control, and risk management. I believe this experience has improved my effectiveness as a manager and strategic thinker, and will serve the Secretary, the Administration, the Congress and the public well.

Finally, in my capacity as Chief Economist, I have had the great pleasure of meeting regularly with business leaders from all parts of the country. It is one thing to observe data trends, it is another to talk to business leaders to understand the decisions that are the basis for those trends. These meetings have been an exceedingly rewarding experience for me, but I believe their true value has been in providing business leaders with a forum where their concerns are heard and responded to by Administration officials.

I appreciate the opportunity to come before you today. I have enjoyed working with this committee and appreciate meeting with members and staff about my nomination and learning more about your work and priorities. If my nomination is approved by this Committee and confirmed by the full Senate, I look forward to working with you and your staff members on all items of shared interest and concern. Thank you.