



**U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE & TRANSPORTATION**
Senator Maria Cantwell, Chair

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

**Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Executive Session**

October 18, 2023

Opening Statement

[VIDEO](#)

Good morning, the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee will come to order.

The first nominee to be considered this morning is Michael G. Whitaker, to be Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration.

Mr. Whitaker is highly qualified with more than 30 years of aviation experience in both the public and private sectors.

Key roles include serving as FAA Deputy Administrator from 2013 to 2016, where he helped advance technological improvements to the National Airspace System, and the transition to the satellite-enabled surveillance technology – ABS-B. This is important NextGen technology that I think is helping us upgrade our aviation system. He also served in major leadership roles at airlines and aviation technology companies.

His nomination has attracted bipartisan support and broad agreement within the aviation community.

I appreciate Mr. Whitaker's commitment to independent leadership, recruiting new talent and building a strong safety culture at the FAA. The FAA has been without a Senate-confirmed Administrator since March 31, 2022.

We look forward for him to come aboard and emphasize the workforce issues of more than 44,000 employees. The Administrator is responsible for the safety of over 25,000 daily commercial flights, 2.5 million travelers and 5,500 airports...and the new technology that is entering the system and the new challenges that it requires for renewed FAA leadership.

It is imperative that the Committee move forward on Mr. Whitaker to [confirmation on] the Senate floor and continue to work with him on many, many aviation issues.

Next, we will consider three nominees to be Commissioners of Federal Trade Commission.

Rebecca Kelly Slaughter is currently serving as an FTC Commissioner and has been renominated. She has previously served more than 13 years here in the Senate, ultimately becoming Chief Counsel for Senator Schumer.

During her more than five years at the FTC, Ms. Slaughter has proven herself to be a strong advocate for consumers and is respected by her colleagues.

I look forward to continuing to carry the FTC's mission of protecting consumers and ensuring that the FTC continues to keep pace with our changing economy.

Melissa Holyoak is currently Solicitor General of Utah. She manages criminal and civil appeals, as well as data privacy and antitrust matters for the state of Utah. Prior to serving as Solicitor General, she practiced law in both private practice and public interest.

Andrew Ferguson is currently Solicitor General of Virginia. In his current role, Mr. Ferguson represents the state of Virginia in appeals and oversees appellate litigation. Prior to this appointment, he served as Chief Counsel to Senate Republican Leader Senator McConnell, who came and testified on his behalf. Mr. Ferguson also has experience in private practice working on appellate and antitrust matters.

Next, we will consider three nominees to be Directors at the Amtrak Board of Directors.

I know it is important to Senator Tester and to others to ensure that Amtrak and the people who represent the Amtrak Board have a non-Northeast Corridor perspective. And I certainly appreciate this because there are many parts of the United States we need to keep moving.

So I look forward to the nominees and understanding how important passenger rail is in Western states.

Anthony Coscia has served as a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors since 2010 and as Chairman of the Board since 2013.

Christopher Koos has served as the Mayor of Normal, Illinois, for the past 20 years. During his time as Mayor, he led the transformation of a small local Amtrak station into a much larger and modernized station. And what's remarkable is this project came in on time and under budget – extremely helpful to what we need to do to Amtrak.

Joel Szabat recently retired from the Department of Transportation (DOT) after serving 38 years in public service. Mr. Szabat is no stranger to us up here on the Hill. He served as Assistant Secretary for Aviation & International Affairs and as Acting Under Secretary of Transportation Policy.

Then Doug Dziak to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission .

Mr. Dziak is Chief Counsel to CPSC Commissioner Peter Feldman. As Chief Counsel, oversees a broad range of issues.

Prior to joining CPSC, Mr. Dziak served in many Senate roles including with the U.S. Senate Committee on the Budget and Senators Enzi and Voinovich.

Lastly, we will consider two Coast Guard officers who have been nominated for temporary promotions.

And I thank all of our staff for getting this markup organized this morning.