

Statement of Ronald L. Batory
Nominee for Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration
U. S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
Wednesday, July 26, 2017
10:00 A. M.

Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson and distinguished members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning. I would also like to thank both President Trump for nominating me and Secretary Chao for her support.

I am a second generation railroader. My late father was dedicated to the industry, as not only a railroad employee but later a full-time career representative of organized rail labor. It became a dream of mine to work in railroads, so after I graduated from college in 1971, my first job was as a traveling auditor in freight car accounting for the Detroit, Toledo and Ironton Railroad Company. I have learned much from many people during my 45 years in the industry, and I would like to bring that experience to the Federal Railroad Administration.

I have learned, for example, that the “brain drain” in the federal sector extends to the FRA. We have fewer inspectors with actual railroad industry experience. We must ensure that we have an adequate and qualified pool of applicants for the critical job of railroad inspector. If confirmed, I would look for ways in which the FRA could partner with the railroad industry to enhance training opportunities. I would also look into ways we could improve communications, both within the FRA and between the FRA and the industry should I be confirmed.

I recognize the Federal Railroad Administration has a multitude of responsibilities, but safety will always be the priority just as it has been throughout my career. Moving to performance-based rulemaking will focus FRA’s efforts on getting the desired outcomes and safety improvements, not just on enforcement of rules and processes. I also believe it will breed innovative thinking to achieve goals and will facilitate the use of new technology.

If confirmed, I will dedicate myself to fulfilling the duties of Administrator, and will look forward to working with the men and women who are part of this organization. I also believe working with Secretary Chao and this committee we can foster both safety and efficiency in American railroads, making them the best in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I now look forward to your questions.