

Opening Statement of James J. Woodruff II, Nominee for Chairman, Merit Systems Protection Board, Before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee

Chairman Paul, Ranking Member Peters, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am deeply honored and humbled by President Donald J. Trump's nomination to serve as Chairman of the Merit Systems Protection Board. I appreciate the Committee's time and consideration as we discuss this vital institution that safeguards the integrity of the federal civil service.

I would also like to express my profound gratitude to my family, whose unwavering love, patience, and support have made this journey possible. To my wife, Stephanie, thank you for your steadfast encouragement through the long hours and demanding responsibilities that public service often requires. To my children, James, William, and Jack, thank you for your understanding and for the joy you bring to my life every day. I would also like to thank my brother, Robert, for providing an example of service as he has made the transition from a 27-year naval career to that of a civilian supporting the Department of the Navy. And to my parents, thank you for instilling in me the values of integrity, hard work, and dedication to public service. I could not stand before you today without their sacrifices and belief in me.

The Merit Systems Protection Board plays a foundational role in our government: ensuring that federal employment decisions are based on merit, not patronage; protecting employees from prohibited personnel practices; and providing due process in appeals. For more than four decades, the MSPB has been a nonpartisan guardian of the principles enshrined in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978—principles that promote competence, fairness, accountability, and public trust in the federal workforce.

Since joining the Board, I have worked closely with dedicated professionals to advance its mission and strengthen its operations. Under the leadership of Vice Chairman Henry Kerner, the MSPB has continued to achieve its mission and ensured the promises of the Civil Service Reform Act. It is through my experience with the United States Air Force, the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission, and the Department of Veterans Affairs that I became intimately familiar with the federal civil service. I understand that a professional, merit-based civil service is essential to effective governance, national security, and the delivery of services that Americans rely upon every day.

I recognize the Board faces significant challenges, including the timely adjudication of appeals and maintaining confidence in its processes. If confirmed, I will prioritize efficiency, transparency, and accountability to ensure the MSPB delivers timely and fair outcomes for federal employees and agencies alike.

If confirmed, I am committed to leading the Board with integrity, professionalism, and fidelity to the law—without regard to partisan interests. The American people deserve a federal workforce that is competent, ethical, and responsive, and the MSPB is central to delivering that outcome.

I look forward to answering your questions today and, if confirmed, to working constructively with this Committee, the Congress, and all stakeholders to fulfill the Board's important mission.

Thank you again for your consideration. I stand ready to serve.