

Opening Statement – As Prepared
Ranking Member Rob Portman
Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee

Nominations of
Erik Hooks to be Deputy Administrator, FEMA, DHS
The Honorable Michael Kubayanda to be a Commissioner, PRC
Laurel Blatchford to be Controller, OFFM, OMB
Ebony Scott and Donald Tunnage to be Associate Judges, Superior Court
of the District of Columbia

Thursday, November 18, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Peters.

Welcome to all of our nominees. Thank you for your willingness to serve in the Federal and DC governments.

Mr. Hooks, you come to us with more than 30 years of public service in law enforcement and public safety in North Carolina. Your firsthand experience working with FEMA, leading emergency management at the state level is critical background for someone tapped to help lead federal emergency management.

The recently enacted Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act included \$1 billion for FEMA's BRIC program. BRIC, short for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program, is relatively new but an example of the critical role FEMA plays in mitigating disasters before they strike. If confirmed, it is my hope that you use your state experience to ensure BRIC is used in strategic ways to target regions with the highest vulnerabilities to disasters.

Commissioner Kubayanda, the Postal Regulatory Commission is small with a staff of around 75 people, but it plays an important role promoting transparency and accountability in the postal system. The Commission examines the Postal Service's financial data, monitors its service performance, and ensures the Postal Service follows the law when setting prices. Over the past two years, the importance of the Postal Service to the nation's supply chain has stood out. The Postal Service, however, faces a difficult situation as First-Class Mail, which traditionally sustained the network, continues to decline.

Commissioner Kubayanda, this is your second nomination to the Postal Regulatory Commission. You have already served as a commissioner for nearly three years and the Chairman since last January. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on the nation's postal system, its challenges, and its future.

Ms. Blatchford, the position of Controller in the Office of Federal Financial Management, Office of Management and Budget is one of the most critical positions at OMB, particularly as the federal government addresses the significant economic and health issues across our country. As a former OMB Director, I know how important OMB and OFFM are to our Federal government's success.

The Controller position is so important that Congress placed specific qualifications for the position in U.S. Code. Under 31 U.S.C. § 504, the Controller is *required* to possess a "demonstrated ability and practical experience in accounting, financial management, and financial systems; and extensive practical experience in financial management in large governmental or business entities." I look forward to discussing with you how you meet these requirements for the position of Controller. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you in a bipartisan way to improve the transparency of the Federal government's spending across agencies and improve access to government accountability across the Executive Branch.

I also thank Judge Scott and Mr. Tunnage for being here today as the committee considers their nominations to be associate judges on the D.C. Superior Court. Both of you have spent essentially your entire careers in public service, and I appreciate your willingness to serve as judges for the D.C. community. Congress has a unique relationship with D.C.'s justice system, as outlined in the Home Rule Act. And there are important issues facing D.C., including rising crime. There have been significantly more homicides, assaults, and armed robberies this year than there were at the same time last year. This is one reason among others why we need impartial and qualified judges on the D.C. Superior Court to ensure timely justice for all parties. I look forward to discussing this and other issues with Judge Scott and Mr. Tunnage.