

Statement of Ranking Member Tom Carper
“Nominations of the Honorable Robert G. Taub and the Honorable Mark D. Acton to be Commissioners, Postal Regulatory Commission”

As prepared for delivery:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for scheduling today’s hearing to consider these important nominations to fill two Commissioner vacancies for the Postal Regulatory Commission. Both Mr. Taub and Mr. Acton’s terms expired on October 14, 2016. They are now one month into a one-year holdover term granted to them under the law, so they must leave the Commission next October unless they’re re-confirmed. It is imperative, then, that we take swift action on these nominees before the end of the year due to the pending critical work on rates before the Commission. I should also note that, if we don’t take action on these two nominations, the PRC will eventually be left with only two Commissioners. That would be unacceptable and create even more uncertainty for the Postal Service and its customers.

We’re considering Mr. Taub’s and Mr. Acton’s nominations at what is a very challenging time for the Postal Service. It is not a time that’s devoid of promise, although to achieve that promise, we need strong leadership at the PRC if the Postal Service is going to successfully confront challenges such as poor service performance issues and the persistent decline in First-Class Mail volume.

The future also offers the Postal Service a number of promising opportunities. Congress and the PRC have important work to do to help the Postal Service take full commercial advantage of its unique delivery and logistics network. The Postal Service operates at the center of a massive \$1.4 trillion printing, delivery, and logistics industry that employs nearly 8 million people. Even as First-Class Mail loses ground to other forms of communication, the future holds promise for the Postal Service in a number of other ways. Advertising mail is still a popular and effective option for mailers. And e-commerce and package delivery are booming, making the Postal Service a vital partner for businesses large and small. Even the Postal Service’s traditional competitors rely on it to carry items the last mile to rural communities around the country.

Mr. Taub and Mr. Acton have been invaluable resources to the Congress as we work on postal reform legislation. Their confirmation will remove uncertainty about the future of regulatory action at the Postal Service. It will also allow Congress to continue its work on postal reform with a clear sense of who will be implementing the reform in the coming years.

This is Chairman Taub’s second nomination by President Barack Obama, and he has served as the Acting Chairman of the PRC since December 2014. He was first nominated and confirmed in October 2011 and has demonstrated proven leadership skills to properly address issues and concerns facing the Postal Service and staying keenly aware of the delicate balance between Congressional and postal industry needs.

Mr. Acton has spent 14 years at the PRC. President Bush first nominated him as a Commissioner in 2005. He was confirmed by the Senate in August 2006. His second

nomination as a Commissioner was by President Obama, and he was confirmed a second time by the Senate in September 2011. As a Commissioner, Mr. Acton has shown a clear understanding of key postal issues, as well as a close familiarity with the concerns of Congress and postal stakeholders.

As I stated at the beginning of my remarks, the PRC has a tremendous amount of work ahead of it in the coming weeks and months, including a required 10-year review of the postal pricing system established in the 2006 postal reform law. We need strong PRC Commissioners to properly address the issues I expect to be raised during the course of the review, which will determine the level of service the Postal Service will offer in the future, and the prices that will be charged for that the service. I believe we need to ensure that there is a quorum of PRC Commissioners in place so that the rate review can happen and proceed un-interrupted over the course of the next year.

I look forward to talking to Mr. Taub and Mr. Acton today about what they think can be done to address the ongoing challenges facing the Postal Service and to hear about the skills, the knowledge, and experience they would bring to the PRC. My thanks again, Mr. Chairman, for holding this very important and timely hearing.