

Ranking Member Portman Opening Statement

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Nomination Hearing:
Kiran A. Ahuja to be Director, Office of Personnel Management and Anton A. Hajjar,
Amber F. McReynolds, and Ronald Stroman to be Governors, U.S. Postal Service

April 22, 2021

As Prepared for Delivery:

Thank you, Chairman Peters. I'm glad to join this hearing today.

Ms. Ahuja, Mr. Hajjar, Ms. McReynolds, and Mr. Stroman, I want to welcome you to our committee and say that I appreciated our recent telephone calls. You have been nominated for key positions at the Office of Personnel Management and the United States Postal Service, respectively, and today I hope we will be able to have a meaningful discussion about the challenges facing both agencies.

The Office of Personnel Management plays an important role in ensuring the success of our government. Not only does OPM develop government-wide human resources programs, but it provides technical guidance and support to agencies in recruitment, retention, performance evaluation, and development of workers. In addition, OPM oversees important benefits programs for tens of millions of federal employees, including their retirements and pensions. Government does not work without people, and OPM's role in maximizing, supporting, and mobilizing the federal workforce is critical.

This past year alone has proven the resilience of federal workers in transitioning to remote work to continue to deliver results for the American people—but it has not been without challenges. And in addition to the pandemic, the crisis at our border appears poised to affect our federal workforce more broadly. OPM recently announced a four-month paid leave program for federal employees to care for unaccompanied children at our border. I look forward to learning more about your thoughts about that, Ms. Ahuja.

The Board of Governors of the Postal Service is in many ways similar to the Board of Directors of a private company. Although a part-time position, the role has big responsibilities. Governors set the rates of all mail and package products. Additionally, it is their responsibility to select the Postmaster General and oversee that individual's performance, as well as to set the strategic direction for the Postal Service as a whole.

As we all know, probably too well, the Postal Service has faced financial struggles for more than a decade due to ongoing long-term declines in Americans' use of mail. During the past holiday season the Postal Service was hit by both unprecedented volume spikes and worker shortages due to the pandemic. The outcome was severe mail and package delivery delays in Ohio and nationwide that took until the new year to resolve.

Over the past 14 years, the Postal Service has accrued \$87 billion in losses and now has more than \$150 billion in unfunded liabilities. At the same time, providing high quality mail and package services to all Americans remains vital. If confirmed, you have a challenging road ahead, and I hope you will work closely with us, and your colleagues already on the Board, to see it through.

Thank you again for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.