

Statement of Senator Susan M. Collins

**Nomination of Martha Johnson to be
Administrator, General Services Administration**

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
June 3, 2009

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**As President Obama's nominee to lead the
General Services Administration, Martha Johnson
comes to the Committee with significant experience
in both the private sector and the federal
government.**

**During her prior tenure as GSA's Chief of Staff,
Ms. Johnson helped lead the agency at a time of
substantial change, including implementation of the
Clinger-Cohen Act.**

**The size and reach of GSA's operations make
meeting today's challenges at the agency even more**

important than when Ms. Johnson last served there more than eight years ago. GSA has over 13,000 employees and an annual budget of approximately \$16 billion. The agency is charged with managing nearly \$500 billion in federal assets -- including more than 8,600 government-owned or leased buildings and a fleet of 208,000 vehicles. GSA's performance has a significant impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of government-wide operations, affecting almost \$66 billion in financial transactions throughout the government.

As the federal government's primary acquisition agency and landlord, GSA must apply lessons that this Committee has drawn from its investigations into mismanagement of the federal government's real property and into numerous examples of waste, fraud, and abuse associated with federal contracting

practices. With total federal purchases of goods and services exceeding \$500 billion a year, federal procurement requires better stewardship of taxpayer dollars. Although important contracting reforms were included in legislation that Senator Lieberman and I authored last Congress, GSA must continue to press for reforms in the federal procurement process.

Another area that I encourage the nominee to address is the crisis facing the over-extended and under-appreciated acquisition workforce. The federal government must invest significantly in its acquisition workforce. The government entered the 21st Century with 22 percent fewer federal civilian acquisition personnel than it had at the start of the 1990s. Moreover, as early as 2012, 50 percent of the entire federal acquisition workforce will be eligible

to retire. This means that as our contract spending continues to increase dramatically, our contracting workforce continues to shrink. Needless to say, these factors have strained the federal government's acquisition workforce and greatly increased the risk of acquisition failures.

But this is not just a numbers game; the federal government must have the right mix of program managers, engineers, cost estimators, contracting officers, auditors, and technical experts. A thoughtful revitalization of our federal acquisition workforce is critical to preventing contracting waste, fraud, and abuse and ensuring that taxpayers receive best value.

GSA must press forward on other challenges as well, including the sorely needed consolidation of Department of Homeland Security offices at the St.

Elizabeths Hospital complex and the management of billions of dollars to renovate and construct other federal buildings.

Of particular concern to Maine and many border states is the role GSA plays in enhancing our nation's border security by managing the planning, design, and construction of ports of entry for Customs and Border Protection. It is now estimated that a port of entry takes more than seven years to progress from planning to ribbon cutting - this is too long.

In my home state of Maine, a new port of entry in Calais has been seriously delayed by GSA's failure to award the construction contract on time and to account for the presence of significant ledge - a common occurrence in Maine. These delays have real effects. Although the new international bridge

connecting Calais, Maine, and St. Stephen, New Brunswick, was completed last year, the U.S. side of the port of entry will not be completed this fall. That is, I would note, an improvement over the original prediction of the end of the year.

These issues attest to the great breadth and depth of concerns that the Administrator of GSA must handle. I look forward to hearing Ms. Johnson's views on these matters and her thoughts on how she proposes to manage the financial, planning, coordination, and other challenges presented.

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