

**Opening Statement for Chairman Joseph Lieberman
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
Nomination of Martha Johnson – GSA Administrator
Washington, DC
June 3, 2009**

Good morning and welcome to this hearing to consider the nomination of Martha Johnson to be Administrator of the General Services Administration – or GSA.

Welcome Ms. Johnson.

GSA is often called the federal government’s “landlord” because it provides workspace and office services for almost every federal office and agency across the nation – from courthouses to ports of entry. Managing 8,600 buildings and \$500 billion in assets, GSA is one of the largest property management organizations in the world.

But GSA is far more than just the federal landlord. Its 12,000 employees are spread across the country in 11 districts and help guide federal spending on everything from basic office equipment to a fleet of more than 200,000 vehicles owned or leased by the federal government.

GSA's purchasing decisions have broad implications for the rest of the economy since as an early acquirer of new technologies, like alternative-fuel vehicles, the agency can help move those technologies from innovation to the market place.

GSA also has wide responsibilities for providing information technology and telecommunications services for federal agencies. With its leadership, GSA can ensure that the federal government is using cutting-edge technology to lower costs, better engage with citizens, and detect and defend against cyber threats.

But the agency is in need of strong leadership. If confirmed, Ms. Johnson will face many challenges. Let me lay out just a few of the most important.

In the area of procurement, the contracts negotiated by GSA must leverage the vast buying power of the federal government so agencies get more value for the taxpayer's dollar.

Last year federal agencies bought approximately \$37 billion of goods and services off GSA schedules, which offer everything from office supplies to human resource services to security equipment to energy management services.

Having GSA negotiate these procurement agreements lets its customer agencies stay focused on their core missions.

But some agencies have lost confidence in the ability of GSA to provide the best products at the best prices and have negotiated their own contracts or interagency contracts that duplicate services offered by GSA.

This defeats the purpose of GSA, which was created by President Truman in 1949 with the specific intent of streamlining the federal government purchasing process.

Today this agency and interagency contracting, including use of GSA contracts, is on the Government Accountability Office's "High Risk" for waste list.

Similar problems exist in GSA's property management activities with agencies sometimes questioning whether GSA meets their needs in the most cost effective manner.

One problem of particular concern to this Committee is the amount of excess or underutilized property owned by the federal government.

In the last Congress, the Office of Management and Budget reported to us that the federal government owns 21,000 buildings worth about \$18 billion that are under used or no longer needed and GAO has had management of federal property on in its "High Risk" list since 2003.

Not all of these properties are under GSA's control, but one of its jobs is to help other agencies dispose of excess property and we need leadership to resolve this problem.

Another important role that GSA plays is as a promoter of green technologies.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act greatly added to the ability of GSA to “green the government” by providing \$4.3 billion to make federal buildings more energy efficient and \$300 million to buy more fuel efficient vehicles for the federal fleet.

These are all big challenges but I believe President Obama has made a wise choice in nominating Ms. Johnson as GSA administrator.

She would bring a wealth of administrative and finance experience in the private, non-profit and government sectors to her new job.

To begin with, Ms. Johnson has a deep firsthand knowledge of GSA, having served as Chief of Staff from 1996 to 2001.

Ms. Johnson began her career at Cummins Engines Company and more recently served recently as Vice President at SRA-Touchstone Consulting and then at Computer Sciences Corporation.

She has also served in the non-profit sector at the Council for Excellence in Government.

Ms. Johnson, I welcome you before the Committee and I look forward to your statement on your goals and visions for leading GSA forward.

Senator Collins.