

Opening Statement of Ashley E. Poling
Nominee, Postal Regulatory Commission

July 16, 2019

Good morning Chairman Lankford, Ranking Member Sinema, and members of the Committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify today regarding my nomination to the Postal Regulatory Commission.

I am thankful for the family, mentors, friends, and colleagues who could all be here today—it means the world to me. I would also like to take a moment to introduce and thank my wonderful parents, Barclay and Lindy Poling. Their unwavering guidance, love, and support over the years have been nothing short of extraordinary, and they have truly shown me what it means to be a public servant. They have also had to hear far more about postal issues over the years than any parents ever should, and for that I will be forever grateful. I would also like to thank Congressman Mark Meadows for introducing me today and Senator Heidi Heitkamp for her letter of support for the hearing record.

I have spent significant time working on postal policy in the United States Senate, and I have been uniquely fortunate to work for three past and present members of this Committee: Ranking Member Gary Peters of Michigan, Senator Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, and Senator Jon Tester of Montana. In over five years of working on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, I have gained a strong appreciation for the vital role that the Postal Service plays in the lives of postal customers across our nation.

In my work for the states of Montana and North Dakota, I have personally seen how post offices represent the heart of the communities they serve and why the Postal Service is a lifeline to the individuals and small businesses in rural America. It became clear to me that in order to protect and improve the speed of mail delivery for rural communities, it was essential to improve service performance across the country by ensuring that strong service provisions were included in any comprehensive postal reform bill. Because service provisions were not considered to be an essential part of reform legislation at the beginning of this multi-year effort, we worked to develop a broader national service protection strategy that ultimately benefitted the postal customer on the local level and would ensure the Postal Service's accountability to its customers.

Relationship building is crucial to the success of any legislative efforts on the Hill, and it was a key part of our educational efforts on service in both the House and the Senate and on both sides of the aisle. Key among those relationships was a strong, bipartisan postal alliance between Senator Heitkamp and the Chairman of the Subcommittee with jurisdiction over postal on the House Oversight and Reform Committee, Congressman Mark Meadows of North Carolina. The Senator and the Congressman became aligned on the issue of service after realizing how much they had in common in regards to rural communities in their respective states of North Dakota and North Carolina. Their advocacy in respect to this issue is one of the primary reasons why service provisions are now an important part of any comprehensive postal reform discussion.

In addition to this specific work on service, I have played an integral negotiating role in four separate postal reform bills over the years and have become intimately familiar with the various components that make up comprehensive postal legislation. Throughout this time, I have continued to build, preserve, and advance trusted and strong interpersonal relationships over

multiple Congresses with the entire postal community. This includes stakeholders from a large coalition of mailers, all four of the major postal unions, postmasters, postal supervisors, the Postal Service, the Postal Regulatory Commission, the Postal Service Office of Inspector General, and offices in the House and the Senate, on both sides of the aisle.

The United States Postal Service is at a critical crossroads in our nation's history. It faces significant financial challenges that pose a very real threat to its long-term viability. The fiscal path that the Postal Service is on is not a sustainable one, but it also has the very real potential for revitalization through needed legislative reforms in Congress. By working collaboratively across the postal community on these challenges, I believe we can preserve, revitalize, and modernize a vital lifeline of communication that has existed for over 200 years. If confirmed as a Postal Regulatory Commissioner, I would welcome the opportunity to actively work with all of our stakeholders, this Committee, the entire Congress, my fellow commissioners, and the Postal Service to find commonsense, lasting solutions to the challenges faced by this agency so that the best results can be delivered to postal customers across our country.

Thank you for considering my nomination and I look forward to answering your questions.

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