

## **Opening Statement of Robert G. Taub**

### **Nominee, Commissioner, Postal Regulatory Commission**

**July 28, 2011**

Mr. Chairman, Senator Collins, and distinguished members of the Committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and for your consideration of my qualifications to be a Commissioner of the Postal Regulatory Commission. I would like to thank President Obama for the opportunity he has afforded me through this nomination, and I am honored by his trust.

I am pleased that many of my family, friends, and colleagues are here, and am grateful for the support they have provided in my chosen career of public service. While I cannot acknowledge them all by name, I would like to introduce my family: my dear wife Cynthia Taub and our daughter, Hannah Taub. Unfortunately, Hannah's twin sister Madeline is at camp and could not be here today to experience our Constitution in action. Also, my siblings who traveled a distance to attend: my sister Beth Laddin and my brother Bill Taub. Like good families everywhere, all have lent me love, encouragement, and a good dose of understanding. While our parents could not be physically present, I feel their support with me here today as well.

I would also like to acknowledge the other presidential nominee on this afternoon's panel: Mark Acton, nominated for another term as a Postal Regulatory Commissioner. I congratulate him for his selection and wish him well. I have known Mark for more than a decade, and it is a pleasure to be with him today.

Finally a special thank you to Secretary of the Army John McHugh for his kind introduction. For close to two decades, I have had the honor and privilege of working with one of the finest officials I have ever met in my more than 25 years of public service. If confirmed, I know I will succeed in the challenges of being a Commissioner if I can bring even half the measure of dedication to duty and thoughtful analysis that I have seen in Secretary McHugh these many years. We started working together in January 1995 when he became Chairman of the newly created House Postal Service Subcommittee, and I had joined the staff after 8 years at the Government Accountability Office. Neither of us could anticipate that the journey of modernizing our nation's postal and delivery sector would take so long or be so challenging. In addition to the numerous postal issues we worked on for 15 years – most notably in passage of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act – I subsequently had the honor of serving as his Chief of Staff for a decade, helping him represent that very rural area of Northern New York State where we were both born and raised. And for the past two years, I have supported him at the Army as he confronts the challenges of managing that Department in the midst of tightening budgets concurrent with a decade of war. So a deep thanks to my boss, my mentor, and my friend, Army Secretary John McHugh.

Last month, the Army celebrated its 236<sup>th</sup> birthday since its founding in 1775. Another institution as venerable as the U.S. Army also marked its 236<sup>th</sup> birthday this year – the U.S. Postal Service. Indeed, almost to the day of this hearing, it was on July 26, 1775 that the

Continental Congress appointed Benjamin Franklin as our nation's first Postmaster General. For 236 years, this is a service that American people and American businesses alike have come and grown to expect. Universal service at a uniform price, no questions asked. Very few in this country go to his or her mailbox or his or her local post office wondering if the mail will be there. It is always there. It has always been there. But the true question, the question confronting our Nation, is *will* the mail always be there?

I want to assure this Committee that I appear here before you today with few delusions as to the difficulties that lie ahead. I believe I have a clear understanding of the serious and numerous challenges that face America's postal system. As you all know well, the mail stream of today has been diminished by electronic means of communication that replace mail. They replace stamps. And thus they replace the revenues necessary to operate our key mail delivery system. Some may even suggest that the time of the Postal Service has passed.

But the fact is, for all the challenges the Postal Service of the 21<sup>st</sup> century faces, it still retains an integral place as a key cog in how American businesses conduct their affairs and how Americans all across this land communicate. The U.S. postal and delivery sector represents a trillion dollar-a-year industry, with 8 million jobs, making it vital to our economy. Postal marketers speak of the proverbial "mail moment" – that instant of receiving and opening mail that holds special meaning – and despite the immediacy of email or Skype, take one look at the men and women in the military and their families stationed around the planet when they get that hard copy letter or packet.

However, the Postal Service is in a serious financial crisis. For the Postal Service to continue to be self-financing may require restructuring its statutory and regulatory framework to reflect business and consumers' changing use of the mail. I am aware that the Postal Regulatory Commission is now conducting its five-year review of the law with recommendations to improve it.

If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to focus my executive and management skills on ensuring transparency and accountability of the Postal Service and fostering a vital and efficient universal mail system. I would bring to the job 25 years of public service achievement and experience, and I pledge to work with all stakeholders to address the current difficulties. There are no easy answers to these challenges, but answer we must. And I promise you, if confirmed, my first priority will be, along with this Committee, the Congress, the President of the United States, and of course the other Commissioners, to engage in a constant search for the discovery and effective implementation of solutions. I am truly honored to be considered. Thank you.