

STATEMENT OF SENATOR CLELAND
CONFIRMATION HEARING FOR COMMERCE SECRETARY-DESIGNATE
DONALD EVANS

January 4, 2001

Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ranking Member, thank you for convening this hearing which hopefully will serve as the harbinger of the bipartisan cooperation our country needs and the federal government requires at this extraordinary juncture in our nation's history.

Mr. Evans, as Secretary of Commerce you will have before you an awesome responsibility--presiding over the department in our federal government which is the focal point for federal policy shaping the economy of the new millennium. You will monitor and administer an incredible variety of programs and policies which are central to preserving America's economic and technological leadership well into the 21st century and beyond.

I don't have to tell you how great an impact the Commerce Department has on our 50 states. In my state of Georgia, export promotion and trade enforcement can determine how well our home-grown products fair in foreign markets, be they Georgia peanuts, Vidalia onions, textiles or soft drinks. Economic development and technology advances can open doors of opportunity for Georgia's large and small businesses, for our farms, and the people they employ. They can be a lifeline for our disadvantaged communities.

NOAA and the National Weather Service are vital to the life and livelihood of the farmers, sailors, and aviators of my state. The ability to provide accurate and timely information regarding tornados, hurricanes and flash floods affects not only every Georgian, but every American from Savannah to San Antonio to Sacramento.

The Department of Commerce is also the steward of the census, the one mechanism we have to establish the nation's population and to ensure equitable representation in Congress and the allocation of federal funds where they are most needed. It is essential that the Department do all in its power to produce as accurate a population count as possible--and one which includes the vulnerable Americans who have in the past been missed. I must say that I believe the approach developed by Secretary Mineta and the current leadership within the Census Bureau is the right approach--one which squares the need for accuracy with the requirements laid down by the courts, and I hope we can work together in a bipartisan fashion to secure such a result under your leadership.

I join the chairman and ranking member in welcoming you before this committee. I wish you success in meeting the challenges before you and offer you these words from John Kennedy: "My experience in government," he said, "is that when things are noncontroversial, beautifully coordinated, and all the rest, it must be that not much is going on."