

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN McCAIN
CHAIRMAN, SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

ON NORMAN Y. MINETA TO BE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

JANUARY 24, 2000

- C First of all, I want to welcome our new committee members as we meet today to consider Norman Mineta's nomination to be the United States Secretary of Transportation. Congratulations, Mr. Mineta, on your appointment to the transportation post. We are pleased to see you before the committee again, and would like to acknowledge any of your family members who may be here.
- C Norm Mineta has all of the right qualifications to serve with distinction in President Bush's Cabinet. His long and distinguished record of public service includes several years as a member of, and then Chairman of, the House Public Works and Transportation Committee. Chairman Mineta was widely renowned for his transportation expertise and his hard work on the issues. It speaks volumes that the transportation community and his colleagues on both sides of the aisle continue to regard him with the utmost respect.
- C The confidence that Mr. Mineta inspires is important, because the challenges he faces at the Department of Transportation are more daunting than ever. Take aviation, for example. As Chairman of the National Civil Aviation Review Commission, Norm Mineta warned us just a couple of years ago that we were fast approaching gridlock – that every day at an airport would be like the day before Thanksgiving. We have nearly reached that point, and no relief is in sight.
- I believe that we must come together immediately and put our individual interests aside, to look into new ideas to ensure that our aviation system can continue to meet consumer and economic demands. Should we privatize our air traffic control system? Should we auction or otherwise allocate slots at our busiest airports? I cannot endorse any particular approach at this point. Even so, my sincere hope and belief is that we can best put gridlock behind us by focusing our energies on capacity enhancements instead of plans to ration existing capacity in the aviation system.
 - Another issue that Mr. Mineta and we face is funding for Amtrak. It is high time for Congress and the Administration to debate and determine exactly what is our national policy for Amtrak. I have long fought Amtrak's continuous backdoor attempts to seek substantial federal funding,

while claiming it is nearly self sufficient. I will continue to do so. Yet if Congress is going to continue to provide subsidies, I believe that we must own up to that fact in full view of the American public. Assuming Mr. Mineta is confirmed, I look forward to the Department's input on this policy decision.

- Again, Mr. Mineta, congratulations. You are a living example of the American dream, and we appreciate your dedication and service. I intend to move your nomination forward as soon as possible.