

OPENING STATEMENT TO THE UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION

ROBERT A. GLEASON, JR

NOMINEE FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE AMTRAK BOARD OF
DIRECTORS

THANK YOU CHAIRMAN CRUZ, RANKING MEMBER CANTWELL, AND
THE REST OF THE COMMITTEE FOR ALLOWING ME TO COME
BEFORE YOU TODAY.

I WANT TO THANK SENATOR DAVID MCCORMICK FOR
INTRODUCING ME TODAY.

I AM PLEASED TO HAVE MY WIFE JEANNE AND OTHER MEMBERS
OF MY FAMILY HERE SUPPORTING ME TODAY, AS WELL AS
REPRESENTATIVE JOHN JOYCE.

MY PASSION FOR TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT HAS BEEN A LIFELONG JOURNEY -- ONE DEEPLY
ROOTED IN MY EXPERIENCES SERVING IN GOVERNMENT AT THE
COUNTY , CITY, STATE, AND NATIONAL LEVELS . GROWING UP IN
JOHNSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, I SAW FIRST HAND HOW
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS CAN EITHER CONNECT OR ISOLATE
COMMUNITIES. IT IS THIS PERSONAL UNDERSTANDING THAT
DRIVES MY COMMITMENT TO BRINGING BETTER PASSENGER
RAIL SERVICE TO SMALL TOWNS ACROSS AMERICA.

IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, MY HOME TOWN OF JOHNSTOWN WAS CONNECTED TO THE REST OF WORLD BY THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD. TRAINS WITH ICONIC NAMES LIKE THE RED ARROW, BROADWAY LIMITED, THE FORT PITT, AND THE CLEVELANDER, 25 DAILY PASSENGER TRAINS ALL STOPPED IN JOHNSTOWN. I WAS A REGULAR RAIL PASSENGER TRAVELING BACK AND FORTH TO PHILADELPHIA TO ATTEND THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA'S WHARTON SCHOOL OF FINANCE AND COMMERCE.

OUR TOWN WAS BYPASSED BY THE INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM AND MOST AIRLINES OVERFLEW US. THE REGION BEGAN A DOWNHILL SLIDE. AS PASSENGER TRAIN SERVICE DWINDLES, WE ARE ONLY SERVED BY 2 TRAINS A DAY.

IN ADDITION TO MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH THE BENEFITS OF RAIL CONNECTIONS AND THE POTENTIALLY DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF A COMMUNITY NOT BEING ON THE MAIN TRANSPORTATION GRID, I AM HONORED TO BE NOMINATED TO JOIN THE AMTRAK BOARD TO CONTINUE IN PUBLIC SERVICE. MY CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE, MAKES ME WELL QUALIFIED FOR THE ROLE OF AMTRAK DIRECTOR. I ALSO PROUDLY SERVED OUR COUNTRY AS A CAPTAIN IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE, FOR 4 YEARS ACTIVE DUTY AND 6 YEARS IN THE RESERVES.

I CURRENTLY SERVE MY COMMUNITY AS PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND I SERVED 10 YEARS AS A BOROUGH COUNCILMAN.

I HAVE SERVED AS SECRETARY OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, A MEMBER OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE, A MEMBER OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE AND FOUR YEARS AS A MEMBER OF THE 5 PERSON PENNSYLVANIA TURNPIKE COMMISSION. I ALSO SERVED AS A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL MOTOR CARRIER ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

IN 1982, I WAS APPOINTED TO ONE OF THE FIRST STATE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEES IN THE NATION TO STUDY HIGH SPEED RAIL. THE 9 MEMBER COMMITTEE WAS APPOINTED BY GOVERNOR THORNBURGH WITH A CHARGE TO STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF CONSTRUCTING A HIGH SPEED PASSENGER RAIL LINE FROM PHILADELPHIA TO PITTSBURGH. THIS WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE WILL CERTAINLY HELP ME AS A MEMBER OF THE AMTRAK BOARD.

ECONOMICALLY, PASSENGER RAIL CAN BE A POWERFUL ENGINE FOR GROWTH. DELIVERING A RAIL PROJECT GENERATES THOUSANDS OF CONSTRUCTION, ENGINEERING, AND OPERATIONAL JOBS. ONCE OPERATIONAL, TRAINS ATTRACT RIDERS WHO SPEND MONEY IN LOCAL ECONOMIES, ESPECIALLY NEAR STATIONS. ENTIRE COMMUNITIES CAN BE REVITALIZED BY THE PRESENCE OF RELIABLE TRAIN SERVICE.

IN SHORT, WHEN DONE RIGHT, PASSENGER RAIL DOESN'T JUST MOVE PEOPLE -- IT DRIVES PROSPERITY.

IF CONFIRMED AS A DIRECTOR OF AMTRAK, I WILL WORK DILIGENTLY TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE ACROSS AMERICA IN A FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE MANNER. AMTRAK BENEFITS GREATLY FROM TAXPAYER DOLLARS, AND I WILL MAKE SURE THAT MONEY IS SPENT IN AN EFFICIENT AND PRODUCTIVE MANNER. I HAVE SPENT A LIFETIME IN PUBLIC SERVICE LIVING WITH PENNSYLVANIA'S SUNSHINE LAWS, SO I AM PROUD TO SUPPORT MORE BOARD TRANSPARENCY.

IN CONCLUSION , I HOPE TO GAIN THIS COMMITTEE'S APPROVAL TO JOIN THE AMTRAK BOARD BECAUSE I FIRMLY BELIEVE THE UNITED STATES NEEDS PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE, AND THAT IT CAN BE DELIVERED IN AN EFFICIENT AND RESPONSIBLE WAY. THANK YOU.

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