

J. Randolph Babbitt
Nominee for Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration
Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee
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Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Hutchison, and members of the Committee for the privilege of addressing you today. It is an honor to appear before you as President Obama's nominee for the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, and I must admit that I am flattered and, quite honestly, humbled by this nomination and the opportunity to serve our nation, Secretary LaHood and the President.

Before I begin, if I may, I would like to take a moment to introduce some of my family that have joined me today, my wife, Kathy Babbitt and my daughter and son-in-law, Heather and Mike Warstler. I am grateful that they could be here with me today. The understanding and support of my family have reinforced me in some challenging times over the years.

By way of background, I have been involved in flying since I was 16 years old when I first soloed. I continued flying and began flight instructing while in college. I left college early to pursue my goal of becoming an airline pilot in 1966. While flying professionally I became active in the Air Line Pilots Association, both in representation and labor relations. In 1990, my years of work with ALPA led to my election as President. I remained in office until 1998. ALPA itself is a large organization and represented at the time, over 40,000 professional pilots with a staff of almost 500 employees, a majority of whom were represented by unions.

After I left ALPA, due to the bankruptcy of my carrier, Eastern Airlines, I continued to pursue my passion in aviation as a private consultant.

In 1999, I had the honor of being nominated by President Clinton to serve as a member of FAA's Management Advisory Council and in 2006 I was elected Chairman of

the Council. Last summer I had the privilege of serving on DOT's Internal Review Team at the request of former Secretary Mary Peters. This team consisted of five members with aviation safety and risk management backgrounds who were asked to review and report on the events surrounding the grounding of two major airlines' aircraft that resulted in enormous expense to those carriers and major disruptions to their passengers.

During my more than 40 years in aviation, I have had the opportunity to work closely with the FAA, industry leaders, and airport officials. I have worked in labor relations with airline management and their labor unions. I have worked with Members of Congress on major aviation safety issues, including one of which I am most proud, "One Level of Safety." I led this project in 1993 while I was President of ALPA. This program resulted in a major reworking of federal regulations that required Regional Carriers to operate under the same rules and at the same level of safety as their Major Carrier counterparts.

I have seen first-hand the importance of cooperation and partnership between the stakeholders in advancing safety. I am quite proud of signing the first Flight Operations Quality Assurance ("FOQA") letter with FAA Administrator David Hinson in 1995.

If confirmed, I intend to build on my extensive experience to meet the agency's current and future challenges by working to foster better communication within the aviation community including the flying-public, the manufacturers, the airlines, labor, the general aviation community and transportation leaders.

But our challenges are not small:

- We need to ensure that world's safest skies become even safer and that we are recognized as the world leader of aviation safety.
- We need to move quickly and efficiently to implement our NextGen Air Traffic Modernization program to maximize the aviation system's efficiency and to accommodate anticipated increases in traffic.

- We can move our aircraft more quickly, more efficiently with less carbon impact with our new technology, but we need to move aggressively with implementation jointly with all of our stakeholders.
- Within the FAA, we need to regain internal labor stability, mutual trust and build on the “can do” spirit of the entire FAA workforce.
- We need to work to ensure the FAA’s accountability and credibility in delivery of its goals, budgetary compliance and safety standards.

I appreciate that later this year this Committee will consider the reauthorization of the FAA’s programs. It will be a time to assess the agency’s performance, set priorities, and support its missions with the necessary funding. If confirmed as Administrator, I will work closely with the Committee to help ensure that FAA’s reauthorization process provides a platform to take our system to a new peak of safety and efficiency and provides wise use of the monies paid by our taxpayers and traveling public.

Mr. Chairman, I am honored by the trust the President has placed in me as his nominee. If confirmed, I pledge to do my utmost to guide the FAA through the many challenges that lie ahead and I hope to use my experience with the same level of skill and judgment shown by my colleagues in aviation. I would like to thank this Committee again for its consideration of my nomination, and I look forward to a close working relationship should the Senate confirm me. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.