

Statement of Susan L. Kurland

Nominee for Assistant Secretary of Aviation and International Affairs

Department of Transportation

July 29, 2009

Thank you Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am deeply honored to be here as President Obama's nominee for Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs for the Department of Transportation, and greatly appreciate Secretary LaHood's confidence and support. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Members of this Committee and your staffs.

Before I begin I would like to introduce some of my family who are here with me today, my sister Judy Biber, my brother and sister-in-law Jacob and Audrey Kurland and my niece and nephew, Rebecca and Marshall Kurland. I would also like to thank my late parents, Milton and Pearl Kurland whose love and support encouraged me along the path that has brought me here today.

By way of background, I have over twenty years of experience in senior level government and private sector aviation roles – including airport, airline, local government, federal government, and airport infrastructure financing. I spent the first several years of my career as an attorney both in government and private practice, and later as general counsel for one of the country's major airport systems. There I saw first-hand the vital economic role that aviation plays, not only nationally but also in our local and regional economies. From there I was honored to serve as Associate Administrator for Airports for the Federal Aviation Administration, leading the FAA's national airport program. I later worked in-house as deputy general counsel at an airline on a broad range of issues. In my current position in public finance, I deal with airport infrastructure financing and municipal finance. These positions have given me a unique combination of aviation experience from several perspectives and many opportunities to see and work through different viewpoints. I have learned first-hand the importance of cooperation and working with stakeholders. If confirmed, I would bring the benefit of these experiences and an open mind to this position.

As the Committee knows well, there are many challenges and opportunities facing us in both the domestic and international aviation arenas, as well as in the areas of international transportation policy involving all modes of transportation. The safety of all facets of our national aviation system continues to be the Department's number one aviation priority. Also key is the modernization of the air traffic control system through

delivery of NextGen initiatives in order to reduce congestion and increase the efficiency of our aviation system.

Among other critical issues that we face are ensuring that consumers have the benefits of vigorous air carrier competition, services and fares. This is especially so during these difficult economic times. It is important to work to preserve and improve air service to small and rural communities through programs such as the Essential Air Service program. With respect to international aviation, working to enhance the competitiveness of our nation's air carriers, other transportation providers and manufacturers globally is essential. Continuing the Open Skies policy and maximizing new opportunities is vital to continue opening up foreign markets to U.S. carriers and improving air service for travelers, shippers and our communities.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Members of this Committee and your staffs regarding these and the other critical issues before us. Mr. Chairman, thank you again for scheduling this hearing and I would be pleased to answer any questions you and the Committee may have.