

Statement of Lori B. Garver  
Before the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation  
United States Senate  
July 8, 2009

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Hutchison, members of the Committee, thank you. I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee for the position of Deputy Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA. I would like to thank Senator Stabenow for her support and for her kind introduction today. Many of my Michigan relatives are with me today, including my mother and my uncle, my husband David, and my sons, Wesley and Mitchell.

I was raised in Michigan by a family who considered public service an expectation. My grandfather, a farmer, spent 12 years in the State Legislature. My uncle, a veterinarian and farmer, followed in his seat and served a combined 12 years in the State House and Senate. I have been in campaign parades with them before I could walk and I took a semester off of college to work on one of my uncle's two bids for Congress. Both of my parents, my sister, aunts, uncles and grandparents are teachers – another honored service contribution. I met my husband on an early political campaign and before he got the space bug, he was also a teacher. It has been my experience that most people who choose public service, do so as a contribution to Society and because they believe part of life's purpose is to leave things better than we found them. For me, space and politics have been that service and my calling for the past 25 years

When I graduated from college, I had never stepped a foot in the nation's capital, but largely because of this upbringing, I drove across the country to come here to try to make a contribution. My first job in Washington, working for John Glenn's presidential campaign, led to my early exposure to the space program. It didn't take long for me to be "hooked". For me, space offered the challenge of a generation who had grown up with Apollo. Space development opened up instantaneous worldwide communication that helped bring an end to the Cold War – the biggest geopolitical challenge of the time. I believe that space exploration helps bring us together as a collective human society. Astronauts, cosmonauts and taikonauts alike all remark on the unifying view from space and their changed perspective upon return. It was no coincidence that the first Earth Day was in 1970 – following humanity's first tentative steps on another celestial body and the iconic photograph of Earth Rise from the Moon taken by the Apollo 8 crew.

This exposure led to my Master's degree in space policy and to the National Space Society where I worked for 13 years – 9 as executive director. NSS is a not-for-profit grass-roots space advocacy organization. This experience embedded my belief that the space program is for all of us. Our government space program must be responsive to American tax-payers in order to be meaningful and sustainable. This understanding only deepened during my five years working on communications and policy at NASA. My NASA experience exposed me to the incredible talent of the NASA workforce. The unbelievable achievements of this team over its 50-year history are unmatched.

The last eight years of my career have been spent working in the commercial sector, with aerospace industry. This experience has taught me that the incredible talent and dedication of the workforce not only resides at NASA, but also in private industry. During this time, one commercial project led me to Russia, where I began medical testing and training for a commercially sponsored Soyuz flight

to the International Space Station (ISS). I developed the project to utilize the unique opportunity of space tourism and commercial investment to help educate the public about the amazing achievements and capability of the ISS. At the time, our boys were ages 10 and 8 and we planned for them to stay with us in Star City for part of the training. The project, called “Astromom” was about better communicating the excitement of space exploration to the general public, with the Discovery Channel filming my experience. Although ultimately unsuccessful, it was a life experience that taught me about international and commercial partnerships, their possibilities and their limitations.

The NASA family is its most valuable resource and I am humbled by this opportunity to return in a leadership position. President Obama has promised to lead our government in a direction to make it work as effectively as it can for the American people. NASA must also continue to demonstrate its relevance, as a source of solutions for the problems we all face today. Every aspect of NASA’s programs can contribute in this way:

NASA helps lead the world in scientific understanding of our planet, our solar system and our place in the universe. What parent doesn’t thrill at their children’s first questions about the night sky? Walk through elementary schools today and look at the art on the walls that includes depictions of the planets (with or without Pluto – depending on your age) and images from the Hubble Space Telescope. No matter how you feel about a cap and trade system, most of us agree that many scientific measurements of planetary climate change can uniquely be made from space, and should be expanded.

Human spaceflight is a symbol of U.S. leadership and technological advancement. Depending on your age, different space exploration milestones are binding memories of society. For many of us, the Moon landings and Apollo-Soyuz. For some of us – Sally Ride’s first flight, or Guy Bluford’s. Why is it that universally, Americans can tell you where they were when they heard about the Space Shuttle accidents? I believe it is because space exploration represents the best in all of us. Our hearts and minds are a part of every mission. I believe we can and should do more to share this amazing chapter of space exploration with the public.

Space exploration and cooperation on the International Space Station have opened up new relationships that continue to provide tremendous value to society. Expanded cooperative activities in robotic and human spaceflight should be considered.

Jake Garn used to have a great line about spending money in space. He said, “You know – you can’t spend money in space – I didn’t bring my wallet, as there is nothing to buy”. The half of a percent of the federal budget that we spend on space today is spent right here on Earth, employing our critical scientific and technological workforce. The nation’s investment in NASA has helped create a private sector workforce at least 10 times as large as the civil servant workforce. In addition, investment in NASA has led to new industries entirely independent from government funding that have contributed greatly to the U.S. economy over the past half century. I believe that a key role of NASA is to continue investing in programs and technologies that have the potential to develop into independent commercial industries of the future.

One of the most visible of these successful industries is aviation and aeronautics. NASA (and its predecessor, NACA) research has contributed much to this global industry. Recent NASA research has helped reduce fuel consumption and noise in commercial and military aircraft and helped

improve safety and efficiency. Yet – there is much more to be done. I believe NASA can and should do more to assist this critical industry to become leaders in green aviation and to improve aviation system efficiency.

I am confident that NASA can address these critical challenges. I am excited about the opportunity to return to NASA in this leadership position, if confirmed. I'm also excited about the opportunity to serve under Charlie Bolden's leadership. We've spent the last few months discussing how we could better address these challenges, if we are given the opportunity. We've spent hours in meetings with many of you, listening to your ideas and concerns and it would be an honor to work together toward our common goals.

It has been many years since I lived in Michigan. My most recent years have been spent in Virginia, raising our two boys. I've tried to be an example to my boys, to help them develop a passion for service. So far, Wes plans to broker world peace and Mitch hopes to discover a cure for cancer. With your support, I'd love to get to work at NASA doing what we can to help address both of those challenges and so many others.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts with you. I look forward to your questions.