

Opening Statement of Ashley E. Poling
Nominee, Commissioner, Postal Regulatory Commission
July 25, 2024

Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Paul, and honorable members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss my nomination for a second term as Commissioner on the United States Postal Regulatory Commission. I would like to thank President Biden and his administration for placing their confidence in me and I am honored to be here.

I would also like to recognize my incredible support system of family, friends, mentors and team members who are either here today in person or are watching from all over the country. My parents, Lindy and Barclay, led incredible careers of their own as public servants, and they have taught me everything I know about doing all that I can to make a difference in the world through their amazing guidance. I am also particularly grateful for the powerful female friendships in my life and thank those extraordinary women for their unshakeable support. All of you have made a powerful difference in helping to shape the person I am today.

Finally, I would like to thank the hard-working men and women of the United States Postal Service for their remarkable work in maintaining this essential public service. The Postal Service is a critical piece of national infrastructure and an important lifeline to individual customers and small businesses in all areas of our country that use it to conduct financial transactions, vote in local and national elections, receive essential medical items, and build up

their home businesses. The organization visits every American address six days per week and has existed since the time of the Founding Fathers.

And yet, in the last several years, the confidence of the American people in their public postal service has begun to slip. In 2021, the Postal Service lengthened service standards for a portion of mail and packages. Despite having more time to deliver the mail, service performance began declining in late 2023 and has continued its decline this year.

During my first term as a Commissioner, I worked diligently with my colleagues on a variety of initiatives intended to help the mailing community, members of the public, and Congress better understand why service performance often did not meet their expectations. I believe transparency and accountability in this area is now more essential than ever.

It is important to explain why service is so significant to me personally. Before coming to the Commission, I worked on postal policy for United States Senators representing rural America. Much of what I learned about the importance of the Postal Service in rural communities came from my time on the ground in the states of Montana, North Dakota, and Michigan talking to constituents about how much they rely on postal services, including access to their local post office.

For that reason, I also have been committed to helping resolve issues with suspended post offices. While some post offices are suspended due to extreme weather events or safety issues and reopened fairly quickly, others remain in the purgatory of suspended status for years or even decades. While the Commission does not have any direct authority over post office suspensions, my colleagues and I have provided substantial transparency regarding this issue through our Annual Compliance Determination. If confirmed for a second term, I will commit to continuing to hold the Postal Service accountable for resolving post office suspensions in a timely manner and in accordance with the law.

Despite the ongoing decline in mail volume, the Postal Service delivers nearly half of the world's mail. Total mail and package volume remains in the billions of pieces every year, and the postal stakeholder community continues to be strong, accounting for over a trillion dollars of commerce. I would be remiss if I did not mention the important role that the Commission plays in giving a voice to Americans' concerns about the future of this essential public service. Frequent engagement with the whole postal community remains crucial.

I would also like to express my belief in the importance of collaboration and bipartisanship in creating and enforcing effective postal regulation. As I am sure all of the committee members here know, there is no Republican or Democratic way to deliver the mail. I pledge to continue working with my colleagues in a bipartisan fashion to provide critical oversight of the Postal Service for the benefit of all Americans.

We stand at a meaningful moment in postal history. As the Postal Service pursues extensive nationwide reforms to its network and operations, it is critical that the Commission hold the Postal Service accountable for meeting its statutory obligations throughout these changes, including maintaining high-quality service. There is no more important time for a strong and engaged postal regulator.

While my colleagues and I have accomplished a lot during the last five years, there are still substantial challenges left to meet and much work to be done to preserve the vital institution that is the United States Postal Service. I thank you for your time and for considering my nomination. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.