

Statement of Elizabeth (Beth) Robinson
Nominee to be Under Secretary for Management and Performance
U.S. Department of Energy
Before the
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate

September 17, 2013

Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Murkowski, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as you consider my nomination for the position of Under Secretary for Management and Performance at the Department of Energy (DOE). It is an honor to be here. I also appreciate the time Members of this Committee already have taken to meet with me, and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with the Committee to address the challenges of maintaining the Department's critical efforts to ensure America's security and prosperity by addressing its environmental, energy and nuclear issues through strong performance and management practices.

I am privileged to have been nominated by the President to this post. I have worked on energy issues at many points in my career. After growing up in Seattle, Washington, studying at the University of Washington, graduating from Reed College, and earning a PhD from the Massachusetts Institute for Technology, I started my career as a geophysicist focused on fluid dynamics in Earth processes. I eventually joined the staff of the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology, where I worked for Chairman George E. Brown of California — a very wise man and someone that I am very glad I came to know well before his untimely death. For the Committee, I covered energy R&D; and I later took that experience with me to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) where my first position was as a budget examiner for the DOE portfolio.

More recently, I have focused my career — at OMB, then at the Congressional Budget Office and now the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) — on strategic planning, performance, and oversight of project management. Working with Secretary Moniz, Deputy Secretary Poneman, DOE's dedicated professionals, Congress, the White House, the private sector, and other key constituencies, I would strive to meet the President's and Nation's objectives for DOE. If confirmed I would also be keenly focused on undertaking the DOE mission in the most effective and efficient manner possible, especially during a time when there are other competing demands for our Nation's resources.

The position of Under Secretary for Management and Performance carries a tremendous responsibility as the pivotal point where operations, accountability, evaluation, and sound management all reside. This position also includes the Environmental and Legacy Management programs, which are responsible for cleaning up our World War II and Cold War legacy, and which I know is important to many members of this Committee.

I know that DOE has faced challenges in the performance of its project management functions, which demands continuous and focused efforts. If confirmed, I would build upon the progress that DOE has made and continue to improve the management, performance, and results for the agency.

Over my career, I am fortunate to have gained broad experience with management and performance issues and challenges. At OMB, I enjoyed a unique perspective from which to learn about, and participate in, large and significant planning, cost-estimating, and evaluation processes. At the House Science Committee and congressional Office of Technology Assessment, I gained valuable expertise in project planning, execution, and oversight, and, more importantly, how to work with the Congress on those issues. My executive experience in several agencies has also provided direct experience in the leadership of complex organizations.

If confirmed, I would make it a priority to work closely with DOE leadership, my staff, and each of the constituencies with which DOE's programs interface to understand the key management and performance issues that DOE and its component programs face. I would also make it a priority to pursue agency and congressional cleanup requirements, and work with affected constituencies to understand their concerns. I would work with my staff so that those issues receive the appropriate attention and resources to ensure agency success in meeting such challenges.

I believe public service is a duty, a privilege, and an honor. I have served as a career staff member for nearly 25 years in the executive and legislative branches of government, and I believe in the importance of creative and tenacious leaders in the Nation's government agencies. I am enthusiastic about the opportunity, if confirmed, to address the challenges of the position DOE Under Secretary for Management and Performance and to bring my energy policy, management, performance, and leadership experience into the service of DOE and the federal government.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I thank you, again, for your consideration of my nomination, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.