Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Nelson, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. As a proud resident of Florida I am honored by the presence of both of my home State Senators, and I would also like to thank Senator Marco Rubio for his kind introduction.

With me today is my wife, Hilary Geary Ross.

Since President-elect Trump announced my nomination, I’ve had the opportunity to meet with many of you. In our meetings, I’ve heard firsthand how we can work together on behalf of the American people. These meetings have been helpful to me. I look forward to our continued dialog.

Mr. Chairman, I am honored to be under consideration for Secretary of the United States Department of Commerce. I’m particularly interested in the Department of Commerce for several reasons.

First, I may be the only nominee for Secretary of Commerce that was a U.S. Census Taker. I was working my way through Harvard Business School and that was one of the jobs that I had during college. At that time, we would put on the big white sash along with a badge and we would visit individual homes and record information for the Census. I was assigned to Scollay Square in Boston. We had to convince people through a small opening of the door that we were helping record an accurate count. So I have some personal experience with the Census – a very important function within the Department of Commerce.

Second, like many other business people across the United States, I have been a consumer of the data and information the Department provides an a periodic basis. Data the Department gathers and makes public, such as the Census data, the data that the BEA puts out and NOAA’s reports, to name a few, are essential functions. I believe there is greater potential in the breadth and the depth of the data the Department provides to encourage new investment.
Third, in terms of telecommunications, the Department auctions spectrum and helps bring access to broadband to communities nationwide. In some small way I have direct experience with broadband deployment. Before this nomination, I was the vice chair of the Utilities Undergrounding Task Force where I live in Southern Florida. The Task Force is eager to move to fiber optics and telecommunications to our community. In order to do so the Task Force had to do it in way that was not damaging to the Everglades.

That brings me to NOAA. Living on the coast in Southern Florida, we are all very sensitive to weather because of the yearly hurricane season. So weather information is critical to us, like so many communities across the United States. I am also well aware of the importance of the fishing industry and tourism to coastal economies, so I am looking forward to the individual issues on those matters that fall within the jurisdiction of the Department of Commerce.

And then there is trade. I’ve made my livelihood for over five decades dealing in international commerce. My companies have operated on the ground in some 23 countries around the world. Sometimes those operations have progressed happily, sometimes a lot less happily.

I’ve also been in the middle of complicated situations in our domestic manufacturing sector and being subjected to some of the bad trade activities of other countries, both in terms of non-tariff trade barriers that some countries impose on us and state subsidies of foreign exports coming into the United States. I think I’ve probably had more direct experience than any prior Cabinet nominee has had with unfair trade in the steel business, in the textile business, in the auto parts business and other sectors. I am very well aware of the issues many companies face and I’m sensitive to both the issues abroad and the issues here at home.

While I have worked with many people across many lands, the thing I’m proudest about in my whole career is working with Leo Gerard, the President of the United Steel Workers of America, and other unions in saving the American steel industry. Working together we were able to save thousands of jobs and ensure this important industry continued in the United States.

I also understand that at the end of the day, each of our trading partners want access to our market. The United States should provide that access to nations who agree to play by our
standards of fair trade. We should not put up with malicious trading activities, state owned enterprises, or subsidized production.

So I am not anti-trade. I am pro trade. But I am pro sensible trade, not trade that is detrimental to the American worker and to the domestic manufacturing base.

During these past few weeks, President-elect Trump has met with many business leaders from across many industries. I have attended many of the meetings. One of the meetings was with leaders from the tech industry. I was amazed how similar the problems they are facing, both in terms of trying to compete in foreign jurisdictions and competition coming in from abroad, are to the problems faced by more traditional industries like steel and textiles. The techniques and products of the tech industry are different but the nature of the adverse trade activities they face are very similar to those experienced by the industries I’ve worked in for many years.

The Department serves many more functions, and I very much look forward to helping the American entrepreneur, the American worker, and American companies both big and small drive this economy forward and to create jobs.

I want to thank my wife for supporting my decision to enter public service, and to thank you once again for the opportunity to be here in front of this Committee. If confirmed I look forward to working with you and with the many dedicated public servants at the Department of Commerce.

I look forward to your questions.