

**Hearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs**
**Ms. Robin Carnahan, Nominee to be Administrator, U.S. General Services
Administration**
Thursday, June 10, 2021

Good morning Chairman Peters and Ranking Member Portman, and Members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to be here and am honored to be President Biden's nominee as Administrator of the General Services Administration. I'm also grateful to Senator Blunt, my home state Senator, for his kind introduction. We've known each other for more than 30 years and our families even longer. I value Senator Blunt's leadership, his passion for public service and commitment to the people of Missouri. Thank you, Senator, for your service.

Even though we're joining virtually today, I'd like to acknowledge my family. My husband Juan Carlos for his unwavering love and encouragement. My mother, Jean Carnahan, who's been a role model and hero all my life. And my brothers, Russ and Tom, and their wonderful families. They've all been a tremendous source of love and strength throughout my life.

Public service runs in my family; much of that serving the people of Missouri. My grandfather and brother served in Congress. My father was Governor of Missouri; and my mother was the first woman from Missouri in the US Senate. My mother's parents were also public servants, though they never ran for office. Mom was born in Washington, DC and grew up across the river in Anacostia. Her father worked as a farmer and plumber at St. Elizabeths Hospital; her mother at the Navy department during the war.

So growing up, the government didn't seem like a far away or abstract concept. For me, it was about the people who worked on behalf of their community and country. Folks who went to work every day to improve the lives of children and families, to help

businesses thrive and keep the country safe. I grew up believing public service to be a noble calling and worthy of our lives. And I still do.

I've had the privilege of serving in elected office, as well as in appointed and staff positions in state and federal government. No matter the role, I always understood my job was to deliver effective service for people and be a wise steward of taxpayers' money.

I'll never forget my first day on the job as Missouri Secretary of State. As I was introduced around the office, I met more people manually opening mail and preparing checks to be deposited than we had in the entire IT department. That moment in 2005 crystalised how I came to view the challenge ahead for government -- to adapt modern technology tools to streamline operations and deliver better service to people.

So during my tenure, we invested time and money in modernizing our IT infrastructure in order to deliver better services to 400,000 businesses, four million voters, and millions of others who needed something from government.

One lesson I learned was that digital infrastructure investments pay off, both in better service and lower costs for both government and taxpayers. But I also learned that without serious attention tech modernization projects can go wrong. The truth is, nothing I did in office caused me to lose more sleep than the rollout of one of those new technology platforms.

Diving in to learn more about both technology and procurement policy led me to GSA, where I served for four years during the Obama and Trump administrations. I joined the digital consulting team 18F whose job is to help government partners more effectively buy and build modern software systems and train non-technical leaders on how to set their teams up for success.

This past year has shown the importance and fragility of our nation's digital infrastructure. As the pandemic swept through the country, Congress responded fast

with programs to meet the challenges, yet far too often that help was slow getting to families and businesses most in need.

The bottom line is, no program passed by this Congress can be fully effective without smart investments in an effective, secure digital infrastructure to deliver it. GSA is uniquely positioned to support that delivery mission across government.

Of course, GSA is about much more than technology. I see similar opportunities to improve the way GSA delivers value to partners in real estate management and acquisition. If confirmed, I look forward to exploring creative and practical ways to rightsize the federal real estate portfolio to serve the changing needs of agency partners and local communities.

In acquisitions, I look forward to working with stakeholders, including agency partners and companies, to streamline and simplify how they interact with GSA. I want to provide easy access and outstanding value to those buying through GSA and an easier on-ramp for businesses, especially small businesses, interested in selling through GSA.

As President Biden recently said in his speech to Congress “We have to prove democracy still works. That our government still works--and can deliver for the people.”

For me, helping our government, our democracy, effectively deliver for the people and taxpayers is why I’m so excited about the opportunity to lead GSA.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am humbled and look forward to answering your questions.