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Contact: Ryan Carey (202) 224-4515

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Wyden Statement at Finance Committee Hearing to Consider Pending Treasury, SSA Nominations *As Prepared for Delivery*

The Finance Committee meets this morning to consider four nominations—a nominee for Treasury Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs and three nominees to be members of the Social Security Advisory Board.

First, Corey Tellez is nominated to be Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, who coordinates the Treasury Department’s communications with the Congress. This is a critically important job not just for the work that this committee does, but many others as well. The person in this role is key to getting the Congress accurate and timely information that allows us to make good policy.

Ms. Tellez is as qualified a nominee as they come. She served as a staffer in both the House and Senate, including 11 years working for Senator Dick Durbin, before joining Treasury’s Office of Legislative Affairs—the office she is now nominated to lead. I have some personal endorsements from Senator Durbin that I’ll share when I introduce the nominees.

The committee will also consider the three nominees for the Social Security Advisory Board. The board is responsible for advising the President and Congress on Social Security policy. It regularly makes important recommendations dealing with maintaining the solvency of Social Security programs, improving service for beneficiaries, and helping seniors enjoy a dignified retirement. For committees like this one that work hard to protect Social Security, the top-notch, bipartisan reports the Board produces on a range of issues are invaluable.

The first nominee to the Board is Kathryn Lang, who currently serves as Director of Federal Income Security for the senior group Justice in Aging. She brings a wealth of experience navigating Social Security’s disability determination process on behalf of seniors and people with disabilities and advocating for changes to improve the Social Security programs.

Having started my career as co-director of the Oregon Gray Panthers, I’m always thrilled to have somebody with a background in legal aid for senior citizens join us in this room.

Next, we have Sharon Lewis, who has spent nearly her entire career fighting on behalf of people with disabilities, including in my home state of Oregon. Ms. Lewis previously served at the Department of

Health and Human Services as the Principal Deputy Administrator for the Administration for Community Living, and served on the House Committee on Education and Labor under Chairman George Miller.

Finally, we have Andrew Biggs, Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. He brings decades of experience on Social Security and retirement policy, previously serving as Principal Deputy Commissioner of Social Security and at the White House during the George W. Bush Administration.

Now, it should come as no surprise that I have serious concerns about Dr. Biggs's nomination given his background as one of the architects for privatization.

Just a few weeks ago, he argued in a Wall Street Journal op-ed that Social Security is not an earned benefit. That represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the program and what it was designed to do. Social Security is an earned benefit because you don't receive it until you've worked and paid into it for at least 10 years.

The mission of every Board member is to work toward gathering bipartisan consensus to strengthen Social Security, and should he be confirmed, I fear Dr. Biggs would be nothing more than a megaphone for partisan ideas to deny seniors their hard-earned benefits.

With Leader McConnell putting forward Dr. Biggs as the Republican nominee for the Board, I am concerned that Republicans' preference is to have someone who has actively worked to dismantle the program rather than protecting the promise that Social Security has represented for generations.

I believe Ms. Tellez, Ms. Lang, and Ms. Lewis are the right people for these jobs at the right time. I will support their nominations and I encourage all my colleagues to support them as well.

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