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## **Wyden Opening Remarks at Committee Markup on IRS, Treasury, and HHS Nominations**

*As Prepared for Delivery*

The committee meets this morning to vote on three important nominations. First up is the nomination of Danny Werfel to serve as IRS Commissioner. Mr. Werfel had an excellent hearing two weeks ago where he reminded everybody why he's the right pick for this job.

A few quick thoughts on the issues that came up during that hearing and in written questions for Mr. Werfel.

One, Democrats have finally given the IRS the resources it needs to begin to crack down on tax cheating by the wealthy and corporations.

After a decade of Republican budget cuts, there is a clear double standard in tax enforcement. It got a lot easier for rich scofflaws to get away with cheating scot free. That means the burden shifted onto the little guy -- people without accountants and lawyers looking out for them.

Democrats are determined to get at that double standard, and I was pleased to hear Mr. Werfel talk about the need to address this issue, rebalance the system to make it more fair, and go after the tax cheating by the wealthy and big corporations.

Second, the IRS needs to keep working on improving customer service and tech upgrades. There's already been progress cutting backlogs and answering phone calls. In my view, these new resources that are aimed at helping the IRS improve service are also going to make it less likely that a law-abiding family or small business will face an audit.

Third, it was clear from his testimony that Mr. Werfel will lead the IRS with a focus on maintaining transparency when it comes to tax policy and maintaining confidentiality when it comes to taxpayer data.

There's been discussion of when the strategic operating plan dealing with the new Inflation Reduction Act funding will come out. Both sides of this committee are looking forward to seeing it, and it's important for the American people to see it. Everybody understands how important it is to get this right, including Mr. Werfel.

In his own words, he's a rule follower. He's going to do this job consistent with the law and he'll work with both sides of this committee. And I believe that's a big reason why he's going to have bipartisan support. So there's a lot of work ahead for the IRS, and I ought to note that we're right in the middle of tax filing season. It's important to move Mr. Werfel's nomination quickly.

Next up is Dr. Brent Neiman, who is nominated to serve as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Finance. This committee last voted on Dr. Neiman's nomination more than 15 months ago -- November, 2021. He was approved 20-8, a strong bipartisan margin.

He's up for a key role in the Treasury that will have him working on issues that are highly important to this committee. Issues including supply chain problems, currency manipulation, and the ongoing fallout from Putin's illegal and brutal war in Ukraine.

He is highly qualified for this job as a renowned expert in international macroeconomics, finance, and trade at the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business. He's also served on the staff of the White House Council of Economic Advisers and at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, and he brings valuable private sector experience.

Fifteen months is an awfully long wait since the first committee vote, so I hope we're able to approve this nomination again with bipartisan support and move it forward quickly after that.

Finally, another nomination back for a second vote in this committee. Dr. Rebecca Haffajee is nominated to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the Department of Health and Human Services. That will put her right at the heart of the department's efforts to tackle the biggest health and family policy challenges, leading on strategy, coordination and research.

That includes working on some of this committee's biggest priorities in health care -- areas where Democrats and Republicans ought to be able to work together. Ensuring that all Americans can get the health care they need when they need it. Improving health care in rural communities, where people are often underserved and feel forgotten.

Dr. Haffajee is also a highly experienced and qualified nominee. She is an accomplished health policy researcher who has served as the acting Assistant Secretary since 2021. This is another nomination that has waited long enough. I urge all my colleagues to support Dr. Haffajee's nomination, and all three nominees today.

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