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May 11, 2016

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Wyden Statement at Finance Committee Nominations Hearing
As Prepared for Delivery

This afternoon, the Finance Committee will discuss the re-nominations of the Public Trustees for the Medicare and Social Security Trust Funds. That sounds like a real mouthful, but for me, this issue goes back to my time leading the Gray Panthers when the Medicare guarantee and the promise of Social Security were sacrosanct.

Today, millions of single, elderly women have to walk an economic tightrope each month, balancing the cost of food, health care and covering the rest of the bills. These women count on Social Security to keep their heads above water. Medicare in 2016 is very different than the Medicare of 1965. Seniors living on extremely limited means are forced to contend with higher drug prices and chronic conditions such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, that are often tougher and more expensive to treat. Our job is to protect these sacrosanct priorities and update these programs for unique times.

That's why business as usual, for a set of positions that are not household names, is not acceptable to me. And, by the way, this is not such a wild idea. The Finance Committee has a 30-year tradition of not reappointing anyone to these positions.

Every year, a big report comes out that looks into the future of Medicare and Social Security, and the Public Trustees play an important part in that process. It's a tough job that means looking into the future for what vulnerable and older Americans will need decades down the road. In my view, it's pretty clear that task requires constantly fresh perspectives for advisory roles like these positions.

What undergirds these positions is not just charts and facts and figures, as important as they are. It's about values and that's why it's so important to get this right.

I'll be listening carefully to what colleagues and the nominees have to say about these concerns. Thank you to our nominees for joining us today.

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