



For Immediate Release
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**Hearing Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Regarding Nominations**

Congressman Horace Mann cautioned:

“More will sometimes be demanded of you than is reasonable. Bear it meekly, and exhaust your time and strength in performing your duties.”

Mr. Soriano and Mr. Gotbaum, these are unreasonably demanding times. And yet, your nation calls upon you to exhaust your time and strength to perform new duties.

Mr. Soriano, you will enter the Department of Health and Human Services when it is implementing landmark health care reform.

And Mr. Gotbaum, you will direct the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation when millions of Americans have seen their pension plan funds depleted by the economic downturn.

The tasks that confront you both will demand much. This Committee asks you to dedicate your time and strength to perform your tasks well.

Mr. Soriano, President Obama has nominated you to be Assistant Secretary of Public Affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services.

At HHS, you will be responsible for helping Americans navigate the benefits of the new health care reform legislation. You will serve as the point person on public affairs matters for the department. Among these matters will be Web and new media and broadcast communications.

Mr. Soriano, you are well suited for the job ahead of you. Your work at the National Committee for Quality Assurance and the Center for Studying Health System Change has given you a solid grounding.

I also note your experience as the editor of a national health care trade journal. And you have authored three books.

Your job will be to help explain the health care reform bill. Note that I said explain, not sell. What’s needed is an honest explanation of what’s in the bill, and what’s not.

The information needs to come from a reliable source. It needs to come in plain English. And it needs to come without jargon or spin.

HHS can be that trusted source. In your new role, you will direct public information from HHS. You will also direct a special outreach division to get the word out — not just about health reform — but also about pandemic events and public health emergencies.

You are an excellent choice for this job, and I look forward to working with you in the coming months.

Mr. Gotbaum, as Director of the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation, you will be responsible for protecting the pensions — and livelihoods — of millions of Americans. As Americans recover from this economic crisis, your task becomes even more important.

The PBGC staff has played an important — and much appreciated — role in developing part of the jobs legislation that Congress is considering this week.

This legislation would provide relief to defined benefit plans in light of the economic stress facing many employers. We appreciate the technical support from PBGC staff in developing this relief.

But we would also very much have appreciated the administration's views on the policy issues that we are facing. We look forward to having a Senate-confirmed PBGC Director soon to give us those views.

In particular, the PBGC will help us to address an issue facing certain multiemployer pension plans. In these plans, existing employers are paying into multiemployer plans to fund retirees and soon-to-be retirees of employers that are no longer in business. If we don't act, this burden threatens to bankrupt many large plans, and employers that fund them. Mr. Gotbaum, we will look forward to your counsel as we tackle this thorny problem.

Your experience has prepared you well for this job. You spent years in the private sector, helping manage and advise American companies and nonprofits. You led Hawaiian Airlines through a successful bankruptcy. And you managed the September 11 Fund.

You are an excellent choice for this job. And I look forward to working with you in the months and years to come.

Today, we also hope to consider the nomination of Sherry Glied to be Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at HHS. In this position, Dr. Glied will make important policy and planning decisions at HHS. And she must do so based on sound information, in a manner that most benefits the American people.

If we can obtain a quorum of Senators present, we will interrupt this hearing to report out Dr. Glied's nomination.

And so, I urge you all to dedicate yourselves to the tasks at hand. I urge you to meet the demands of the positions to which you have been nominated. And I urge you to serve America — and Americans — with exhaustive time and strength.

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