



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 7, 2017

Contact: [Taylor Harvey](#) and [Rachel McCleery](#) (202) 224-4515

Wyden Statement at Finance Committee Hearing on Treasury, HHS Nominees
As Prepared for Delivery

This morning the Finance Committee will consider four nominations:

- Mr. Eric Hargan to be deputy secretary of the Health and Human Services Department.
- Mr. David Malpass to be undersecretary for international affairs at the Treasury Department.
- Mr. Drew Maloney to be deputy undersecretary of the Treasury Department for legislative affairs.
- And Mr. Brent McIntosh to be the Treasury Department general counsel.

Let me begin with Mr. Hargan's nomination to be HHS deputy secretary. It's the second-highest ranking position at the department, effectively the chief operating officer, a big job that encompasses a lot more than making sure the trains run on time. As an example, Mr. Hargan held this job on an acting basis during the Bush Administration. If the *Wall Street Journal* is to be believed, he used his position to block efforts by the FDA to increase food safety inspections.

Today, with HHS pushing a radical agenda that would send the number of Americans without health coverage through the roof, endanger seniors who count on Medicaid for nursing home care, and slash the programs that lay out basic living standards for working families, Mr. Hargan and every HHS nominee will face serious questions about how they'd approach their roles.

Next, if confirmed, Mr. Malpass would lead the office at Treasury in charge of advancing our leadership in the global economy. It's a tough job under any president. It's extraordinarily difficult under this one. Senior Trump officials regularly contradict each other on major economic policy issues, and then the president contradicts them. Is the administration for a strong dollar or a weak dollar? Nobody knows. Statements and actions on climate, trade and NATO have alienated long-time allies and close economic partners, handing China greater power and influence. Given all that, it'll be vital to focus on finding policies that give all Americans a chance to get ahead and advance our country's interests at the same time.

Mr. McIntosh is nominated to be Treasury general counsel. A key part of his portfolio, if confirmed, will be guaranteeing that sanctions and rules on foreign investment are enforced and adhered to. And during an administration rife with scandal and conflicts – reportedly including undisclosed meetings with a Russian bank under sanction – the Treasury general counsel has to be unflinching in their commitment to that task, even if they come under pressure to neglect it.

Finally, I want to take a moment to address the issue of Congressional Oversight, which is closely relevant to the jobs Mr. McIntosh, as general counsel, and Mr. Maloney, as deputy undersecretary for legislative affairs, are nominated to fill at the Treasury.

Word has come down from the Trump White House that the executive branch essentially has free reign to ignore the questions that come from Democrats conducting oversight. The White House counsel's office is quoted as saying that the administration will only respond to the chairmen of congressional committees, and of course all the chairmen are Republicans. So this is a stated policy of stonewalling Democratic lawmakers.

I want to make my feeling on this clear. This is a disgrace, and it is deeply undemocratic. Members of Congress do not conduct oversight of the executive branch for sport. Our obligation to perform vigorous oversight is derived from the powers laid out in Article One of the Constitution. We ask questions directly on behalf of the people we represent, and it's those people, not just us in Congress, the administration owes answers to. Bottom line, this is not the behavior of a government that sees itself as answerable to the people.

The Finance Committee has a bipartisan tradition of supporting the right of the minority to get responses from the administration regardless of party. One of the questions this committee poses to every executive branch nominee that comes before us is, "do you commit to provide a prompt response in writing to any questions addressed to you by any Senator of this committee?" I'll repeat the last part – "*any* Senator of this committee," not "any Senator of this committee *with an R next to their name.*" When nominees answer "yes," we take them at their word.

This is an issue near and dear to members on both sides. Senator Grassley's got a track record of fighting as hard as anybody out there for transparency and responsiveness from the executive branch. And I'd wager that every member on my side of the dais could rattle off examples of letters they've sent to this administration only to get nothing substantive in return.

It's true that in the Trump administration, Treasury has not been the worst culprit in terms of stonewalling oversight inquiries. If confirmed, Mr. McIntosh and Mr. Maloney will have a direct hand in working with Congress on these issues. And very shortly they'll get that same question asked of every nominee who sits before this dais. So it's my expectation that Mr. McIntosh and Mr. Maloney will help guarantee that the department responds to the inquiries of all of the Committee's members, not just those of the President's party.

###