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Wyden Statement at Finance Committee Hearing on Pending Nominations
As Prepared for Delivery

This morning the Finance Committee meets to discuss five nominations to important positions in the executive branch: Mr. Jeffrey Kessler is nominated to serve as Assistant Commerce Secretary for Enforcement & Compliance, Ms. Amy Karpel and Mr. Randy Stayin are nominated to serve on the U.S. International Trade Commission. And Ms. Elizabeth Ann Copeland and Mr. Patrick Urda are nominated to serve as judges on the U.S. Tax Court.

I'll speak briefly on each, beginning with the three trade-related nominations. This administration swept into office with a lot of tough talk when it came to trade and manufacturing jobs at home.

I agree that NAFTA needs renegotiating. I agree that the U.S. needs to step up with tough action against China's abusive trade practices.

But after a year and a half of work, the Trump Administration has managed to unite our traditional allies with China against us. In many ways, China is getting away with its cheating scot-free. Instead of creating American jobs, this trade policy is creating chaos.

With respect to today's hearing, the good news is that the three trade-related nominees before us are all set to fill enforcement-related positions. In my view, step one when you're looking to sharpen our trade policies and fight for American workers is enforcing the laws on the books. Mr. Kessler would fill one of the top jobs at the International Trade Administration within the Commerce Department, and Ms. Karpel and Mr. Stayin would play key roles as ITC Commissioners helping to make sure our trade policies are benefitting American workers and businesses. All three are qualified nominees, and I look forward to discussing enforcement issues further with them.

Next are Ms. Copeland and Mr. Urda, who are nominated to serve as Tax Court judges. The tax court is the judicial backbone of the federal tax code. It's the best opportunity Americans have to dispute tax bills before they have to pay -- and it keeps them from getting stuck in slow-moving courts when they have a tax issue. It's a tough job that requires a lot of time on the road. So I'm thankful that Ms. Copeland and Mr. Urda are willing to serve.

Thank you, Chairman Hatch, for convening this hearing. I look forward to questions.

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