

Crapo Statement at Nominations Hearing

June 24, 2021

Washington, D.C.--U.S. Senator Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, delivered the following remarks at a hearing to consider nominations for Deputy U.S. Trade Representatives (USTR) and the Assistant Secretary for Legislation at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The text of Ranking Member Crapo's remarks, as prepared, is below.

"Thank you Mr. Chairman.

"Ms. Bianchi, Mr. White and Dr. Egorin, welcome, and congratulations to all of you on your respective nominations to very important positions.

"While I appreciate we have two Deputy USTR nominees before us, I am disappointed the Administration has yet to nominate anyone to serve as USTR Chief Innovation and Intellectual Property Negotiator (Chief IP Negotiator), U.S. Ambassador to the World Trade Organization (WTO) or Chief Agricultural Negotiator.

"The Administration's failure to nominate a Chief IP Negotiator and a U.S. Ambassador to the WTO is particularly striking because the WTO is starting weekly meetings today to discuss a potential waiver to the WTO TRIPS Agreement.

"Not only is the decision to seek a waiver misguided, but it is also unwise to negotiate such a waiver without having the appropriate negotiators in place.

"The Administration should promptly name qualified individuals to these roles.

"Likewise, the United States needs a qualified Chief Agricultural Negotiator as soon as possible.

"This is particularly important for agricultural areas like Idaho, where 31 percent of gross farm income comes from exports.

"USDA estimates the United States will export \$164 billion in farm goods this year.

"That impressive number could be much higher if we could open more markets to our world class agricultural sector.

“Accordingly, the United States needs effective Deputy USTRs to tear down trade barriers and confront abusive trade practices, and today’s nominees are well-qualified for their positions.

“I urge each of them to remember that any strong trade policy requires a close partnership between USTR and Congress.

“Ms. Bianchi and Mr. White are no strangers to government service, having each served for more than a decade in various capacities.

“I look forward to hearing more from both of you, Ms. Bianchi and Mr. White, regarding how you would use your experience to engage the numerous challenges facing the United States, particularly those involving China’s intellectual property theft, discriminatory digital services taxes and the proliferation of trade barriers in Mexico.

“Turning to Dr. Egorin’s nomination, the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, or ASL, of HHS serves as a key liaison between Congress, the Department and its sub-agencies.

“HHS is a sprawling department, with policies affecting nearly every American, making Congress’s oversight and engagement incredibly important.

“Medicare and Medicaid, two of the largest programs HHS oversees, fall within this Committee’s jurisdiction.

“Together, they account for more than one-fifth of all federal outlays.

“When issues arise in these programs, the ASL is one of the first phone calls members and staff make.

“Responsiveness, transparency and clarity in communication are therefore key attributes of any successful ASL.

“Dr. Egorin would bring substantial experience to the role from her background on the House Ways and Means Committee.

“As the Deputy Staff Director for the Health Subcommittee, she has partnered effectively with our staff on issues of bipartisan concern.

“Dr. Egorin, if you are confirmed, my staff and I look forward to our continued partnership in working to improve our health care system.

“I request that each of our three witnesses today be detailed and candid in responses to our questions, both here and in response to questions for the record following this hearing.

“Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing today. I look forward to hearing from each of our nominees.”

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