



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

The gods have a way of dropping Earth-shaking news right before Finance Committee hearings. This morning's hearing is no different, and the news that broke last night about the prosecutions of two Trump associates now has ramifications for one of the nominations before the committee today.

The president's personal lawyer and his former campaign chairman are confessed or convicted felons. They join a long and growing list of Trump associates who've broken the law. Mr. Manafort, relevant to this committee, stole from every American taxpayer when he committed tax fraud. Mr. Cohen's crimes are also relevant to our investigative work in multiple areas. But the Trump Treasury Department is continuing to stonewall this committee's attempts to investigate these matters of criminal tax evasion, corruption and foreign influence in our elections. That is why I am maintaining holds on all Treasury nominations.

Yesterday's news makes one issue clear: By refusing to answer our questions, the Trump Treasury department is helping to cover up criminal activity. This stonewalling has gone on far too long. When the Treasury decides to play ball and provide satisfactory answers to the questions Democratic members of this committee are asking -- not just Republicans -- then it will no longer be necessary to hold nominees.

Onto the two nominations before the committee this morning. If confirmed, Mr. Michael Faulkender will head up the Office of Economic Policy at the Treasury Department. He'll be in charge of some of the most important economic analysis that comes out of the executive branch.

It's a significant job, in no small part because the Trump administration -- particularly when it comes to tax -- has proven to be a purveyor of economic fiction. And you don't have to take my word for it. You can ask any typical American worker if they've gotten the \$4,000 raise they were promised they'd get as a result of the Trump tax law. You can also ask any respected, mainstream economist whether tax handouts to the wealthy and corporations pay for themselves.

A lot of these rainbow and unicorn tax fantasies came straight from the White House. But during the debate on the tax bill, Secretary Mnuchin also fabricated a story about Treasury, and the Office of Economic Policy in particular, putting out a comprehensive analysis that would prove these fantasy claims to be true. But what Treasury DID release wasn't a full report -- it was a single page, and it failed to meet the middle-school math-class standard of "showing your work."

So first of all, I hope that if Mr. Falkender is confirmed, he'll get the office back in the game on these big legislative issues. And second, I hope he will give the Congress and the public reason to believe Treasury's economic analysis is trustworthy.

That won't be an easy job, because this administration often seems to be allergic to facts. But given how vital a role this office plays at the Treasury -- and not just on tax policy, but on international trade, financial markets, and much more -- this is an important post.

Second, Ms. Elizabeth Darling is nominated to serve as commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth & Families. Over the last few years, the Finance Committee worked extensively on a bipartisan basis to pass the largest overhaul of our child welfare system in decades. If confirmed, Ms. Darling will have a big role to play in implementing that legislation, so both sides of this committee will look forward to working with her on that front.

But in the meantime, I'm concerned that the Trump administration is turning its attention toward proposals that would undo much of the progress that's been made with respect to child welfare. First, there is an effort by this administration to slash child welfare funding in the long-run. It's the same type of hit-job the president's budget-crunchers want to inflict on Medicaid -- capping funding and crippling the ability of states to serve many of the most vulnerable youngsters and families out there.

There's also an attempt underway to allow child welfare providers to discriminate against potential foster parents simply because they are LGBTQ Americans or people of particular faith backgrounds. The acting head of the Administration for Children and Families says he wants to move further in that direction.

Colleagues, this is wrong. Not only is it a discriminatory policy based on nothing but intolerance, it would almost certainly deny a lot of children the opportunity to grow up in safe and loving homes.

I'll have questions for Ms. Darling on these issues, and I hope she will stand up against these policies if she's confirmed.

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