



# Committee On Finance

**Max Baucus, Ranking Member**

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Contact: Laura Hayes  
202-224-4515

### **Statement of U.S. Senator Max Baucus Nomination Hearing for Michael O'Grady, Jennifer Young, and Bradley G. Belt**

To the nominees, I want to congratulate each of you on your selection and welcome you and your families to the Finance Committee. The nominees before us today have impressive credentials and experiences. They bring extensive background and knowledge directly related to their positions. They also have an interesting array of experiences that will no doubt strengthen their abilities to serve this country.

Michael O'Grady brings a wealth of policy experience to the table as a policy analyst at Congressional Research Service for many years, and more recently a staffer for Senator Roth on the Finance Committee. It is always a pleasure to welcome back former Finance Committee staffers. Mr. O'Grady, I have full confidence in you, and look forward to working with you on the difficult policy issues that face our country.

I would ask that you focus on a specific concern as the new head of Office of Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE). Traditionally, ASPE has been a highly-regarded sponsor and originator of non-partisan social policy research and analysis that has made significant contributions to policy debates. I have strong concerns about the direction that ASPE has taken under this administration. I am troubled to learn that it has become more political than policy. I believe this shift has something to do with the low staff morale at ASPE. I look forward to hearing Mr. O'Grady's plans to address these concerns.

Jennifer Young is also no stranger to this Committee. Jennifer served on Senator Roth's Finance Committee team, in addition to stints on the Ways and Means Committee and the National Governors Association. We welcome her back as well. Ms. Young has thorough knowledge of the issues that we are working on right now. Ms. Young has served in the "acting" capacity of this job for the past five months. As such, she has played a central role in the Medicare conference negotiations, so I have had the opportunity to work with her on an almost daily basis.

Finally, Bradley Belt has been appointed to serve an important role as a Member of the Social Security Advisory Board. Created by the 1994 Act that made the Social Security Administration an independent agency, the Social Security Advisory Board has produced many excellent reports about all aspects of Social Security. My staff and I have found these reports to be valuable resources.

Mr. Belt has experience in the area of Social Security policy which he gained by serving as Executive Director of the National Commission on Retirement. Mr. Belt also has vast experience working on other areas of public policy. For example, he has served as Senior Vice-President of the Center for Strategic and International studies.

The Social Security Board has already issued a number of outstanding reports about the problems facing the disability portions of the Social Security and Supplemental Security Income programs. While I am concerned about all of these problems, I am especially concerned about the long periods of time that many applicants must wait before approval of disability benefits.

Social Security Commissioner Barnhart is intent on fixing these problems. Toward that end, she recently unveiled a new Service Delivery Plan for these two programs. And it is my understanding that the Social Security Advisory Board will be analyzing this plan. I believe that the Finance Committee needs to have a hearing on this plan early next year, and I look forward to working with Chairman Grassley to try to achieve that goal. I urge Mr. Belt to plunge into this issue once he is confirmed.

I look forward to hearing your testimony and to working with Chairman Grassley to ensure quick confirmation by the full Senate. There is much work to be done. I look forward to working with you to achieve results for the American people. Congratulations on your nominations.

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