



For Immediate Release
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**Hearing Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Regarding Nominations**

We have before us today the nominations of Christopher Padilla to be Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade, Christina Pearson to be Assistant Secretary of Public Affairs of Health and Human Services, and Benjamin Sasse to be Assistant Secretary of Planning and Evaluation of Health and Human Services.

Mr. Padilla, your nomination comes at a critical point in American trade policy. How we develop our international trade policy today will determine whether younger generations view trade as a force for economic development, or a cause of economic hardship. How we act today will decide whether our children and grandchildren view China, India, and our other trading partners as an opportunity, or as a threat.

The Under Secretary of Commerce can help decide these important questions. That position is responsible for ensuring that the administration vigorously enforces U.S. trade remedy laws so critical to firms around the country, including Montana's lumber industry. In that role, the Under Secretary must ensure that the United States preserves key trade remedy disciplines in the World Trade Organization Doha Round negotiations, particularly zeroing.

The Under Secretary also supports and promotes U.S. exports by overseeing the operation of the Foreign Commercial Service.

And the Under Secretary is essential to other elements of the trade agenda as well. I look forward to working together to expand Trade Adjustment Assistance, consider pending free trade agreements, and enforce our trade agreements.

I hope and trust that you will pursue all of these responsibilities to the utmost. And I hope and trust that we can cooperate to pursue an international economic agenda that allows future generations to look abroad for hope, opportunity, cooperation, and prosperity.

The Finance Committee is also considering the nominees for the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs and Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the Department of Health and Human Services.

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The Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs serves as the Secretary's principal counsel on public affairs matters. As such, this Assistant Secretary shapes and presents the face of HHS. This Assistant Secretary is the conduit for valuable health information to the nation. This Assistant Secretary needs to provide centralized leadership and guidance for public affairs activities within HHS. And that responsibility extends to regional offices, conducting national public affairs programs, and perhaps, most importantly, administering the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act.

The second Assistant Secretary at HHS before us today, the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, runs the policy setting arm of HHS. This Assistant Secretary advises the Secretary on policy developments in health, disability, human services, data, and science, as well as on economic policy. This Assistant Secretary has the responsibility of leading special initiatives, coordinating the Department's evaluation, researching activities, and managing cross-Department planning activities such as strategic planning, legislative planning, and review of regulations.

Integral to this role, this Assistant Secretary conducts research and evaluation studies, develops policy analyses, and estimates the cost and benefits of policy alternatives under consideration by the Department or Congress.

Both of these positions require the ability to act in the best interest of the American people. They require functioning with integrity and clear mindedness, not with political posturing as the motivation. The people of this nation and around the world depend on the information coming out of HHS to be accurate, impartial, and motivated by sound peer-reviewed science. Additionally, the information coming out of HHS is used by millions to make important life-altering decisions.

I congratulate Ms. Pearson and Mr. Sasse on their nominations to these important positions. I encourage them to remember how many people will be depending on them if they are confirmed. And I remind them of how vital it is for them to put the needs of Americans before anything else.

I commend all the nominees for their willingness to serve. Service — whether in church, community, or government — can be one of the most fulfilling parts of life. And so I congratulate the nominees on their nominations. And I call on the nominees to carry out their positions in the finest traditions of public service.

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