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**Opening Statement of William J. Wilkins
Nominee for Chief Counsel, Internal Revenue Service
And an Assistant General Counsel, Treasury Department
United States Senate Committee on Finance
July 14, 2009**

Thank you Chairman Baucus, Ranking Member Grassley, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to have been nominated by President Obama to serve as IRS Chief Counsel. I am grateful to Commissioner Shulman and to Secretary Geithner for recommending me to the President.

I am also pleased to be able to return to this hearing room. I will always treasure my experience of working on the staff of this Committee. If confirmed, I will certainly value open communications with the Committee on Finance.

Let me also express my gratitude to my family for their support as I begin this new challenge. My wife Gail is with me here today. Gail and I have one son, Sam, who is in the class of 2011 at West Point. Right now, Sam is at the Academy helping conduct basic training for the entering class of 2013.

Regarding my own experience and qualifications, I have practiced tax law for 32 years. As I mentioned, I worked on the Finance Committee Democratic staff from 1981 to 1988. I initially worked on the tax staff under Senator Russell Long; and following the 1986 elections and Senator Long's retirement, I was Staff Director and Chief Counsel under Chairman Lloyd Bentsen. The Tax Reform Act of 1986 was the tax policy highlight of these years, but there were several other significant tax measures enacted as well.

I have also worked in two outstanding private law firms. I have been a partner at my current firm, Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr, since leaving the Finance Committee staff in 1988. I have advised for-profit and nonprofit clients on a broad variety of tax compliance, tax planning, and transactional issues.

I have also been active with the Section of Taxation of the American Bar Association. I am currently Chair of the Section, and I served in several other Section offices prior to becoming Chair last August. The Section of Taxation is the country's largest association of tax lawyers, with over 20,000 members. I believe the Section makes a great contribution to the tax system through outstanding legal education, providing support for tax pro bono activities, and thoughtful participation in the tax guidance process. It has been a privilege to lead the Section over the past year. My term as Chair is nearly complete; and in any event I would not hold any Section office while I was a government employee.

The IRS Chief Counsel has significant responsibilities for administration of the tax system. The Office of Chief Counsel has approximately 2,300 employees, including approximately 1,600 lawyers. The Chief Counsel's office provides legal advice to the Commissioner and to the operating divisions of the IRS; litigates cases in the Tax Court; works closely with the Department of Justice on tax-related matters before other federal courts; formulates overall litigation strategy; and writes regulations and other guidance implementing tax laws enacted by the Congress. The work of the Chief Counsel's office calls for technical expertise; interpersonal skills in dealing respectfully and effectively with counterparts inside and outside the government; and above all, sound judgment. If confirmed, it is my goal to provide the leadership necessary for the Office of Chief Counsel to demonstrate the highest levels of skill and judgment in carrying out its important responsibilities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today.