



For Immediate Release
November 4, 2009

Contact: Dan Virkstis
202-224-4515

**Hearing Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Regarding Top Trade and Treasury Nominees**

The French poet Jean de la Fontaine said:

“No path of flowers leads to glory.”

To our witnesses today: President Obama has nominated the three of you to travel important paths, guiding America’s trade and tax policies. Each of you must travel a path littered, not with flowers, but with stones. But you must navigate these paths with sure feet, and find success at the end of the road.

Mr. Punke, President Obama has nominated you to be the Deputy U.S. Trade Representative in Geneva. Your path will twist and turn through the complex World Trade Organization Doha negotiations.

I am confident that you have the experience to navigate this path successfully. You have more than 20 years of international trade law and policy experience, in both the public and private sectors. You served as White House Director for International Economic Affairs during the Clinton Administration. And you spent several years practicing international trade law at a top firm. You also very ably served this Committee as my international trade counsel.

You unquestionably have the requisite tools for this position. But yours is not an easy road. The path that you must travel is marked with past failures to conclude the Doha negotiations. And as you round each curve, you must keep the needs of American exporters first and foremost in your mind.

A successful conclusion to the Doha negotiations must provide real, meaningful market access for American producers. Our ranchers, farmers, manufacturers, and service providers can compete with the world’s finest. We must make sure that our trade agreements give them the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Punke, I know from personal experience that you have the ability to successfully navigate your path. You have my full confidence.

Dr. Siddiqui, President Obama has nominated you to be the Chief Agricultural Negotiator at USTR. Your path must lead to new and additional market access for American agricultural exports, while ensuring that current markets remain open.

Your experience makes you uniquely qualified for this role. During the Clinton Administration, you held several high-level positions at the Department of Agriculture. You were a Senior Trade Advisor to then-Secretary Dan Glickman. And you were the Undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. You currently work at CropLife America, where you have focused on international trade and regulatory matters.

You also have the requisite tools for this position. But yours is also not an easy road. The path that you must travel is marked with previous attempts to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers to American agricultural exports.

As you travel your path, you must continue this valiant effort. Beef, wheat, and other exporters in Montana, and throughout America, produce some of the world's finest agricultural products. I have no doubt that they can compete with the rest of the world.

But in Doha and other negotiations, you will have to work hard to break down the walls to American exports. Dr. Siddiqui, your experience tells me that you have the ability to successfully navigate your path.

Mr. Mundaca, President Obama has nominated you to be the Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy at the Treasury Department. Your path will lead you through the halls of Treasury and the halls of Congress, as you develop significant tax policies, and Congress begins to consider tax reform.

Your experience has readied you for this important task. You were previously the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Treasury for International Tax Affairs. And you were a partner at a top accounting firm. Before that, you were an attorney in the Office of the International Tax Counsel at Treasury.

You have the requisite tools for this important position. But yours is also not an easy path. The path that you must travel is marked with past efforts to improve the administration of U.S. tax policy. As you travel this path, you must keep in mind the unique challenges of this economic environment.

Significant tax reform must be considered carefully and thoughtfully. Our fiscal situation demands that we make every effort to close the tax gap. And health care reform will create new challenges in tax administration.

Mr. Mundaca, I urge you to bring your years of experience to these tasks. I am confident that you, too, will successfully navigate your path.

I encourage each of you to undertake your new responsibilities vigilantly. American exporters and taxpayers are depending on you. I encourage each of you to navigate the twists and turns of the roads that you face, and to find the paths that lead to success.

###