

Opening Statement by Rhonda K. Schmidlein
Nominee to be Member of United States International Trade Commission
Before Senate Committee on Finance Confirmation Hearing
November 20, 2013

Chairman Baucus, Ranking Member Hatch and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. I am deeply honored and grateful to have been nominated by President Obama for the position of Commissioner of the United States International Trade Commission.

I would like to introduce and thank my family members who are here with me today: my husband John and our daughters Anna and Julia, my parents Roger and Marilyn Schnare, who will celebrate their 48th wedding anniversary next week, and my father-in-law, John Schmidlein, who practiced law here in Alexandria for over 40 years until retiring in 2006. I am grateful to each of you for your love and support over the years. I also want to acknowledge my friends who are here today and thank them for coming and for their steadfast support and encouragement.

I have been privileged to spend my career in public service. Starting at the U.S. Department of Justice and then at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and later at the U.S. Public Company Accounting Oversight Board, I was proud to represent the United States in negotiations and trade-related disputes.

My work as a trade lawyer has given me a keen appreciation for the important work of the ITC. While the ITC may be relatively unknown to the general public, it plays an important role in the U.S. economy through its administration of U.S. trade remedy laws including Title VII and Section 337. These laws provide a vital tool for U.S. companies that are faced with unfair trade practices, and the ITC's decisions can impact the livelihoods of workers, farmers and businesses across America.

Another important - but perhaps less recognized – aspect of the ITC is the role it plays in maintaining the credibility of US trade remedy laws. As a lawyer who has represented the United States in challenges to the application of US trade remedy laws both in the US courts and at the WTO, I understand first hand the importance of maintaining objectivity in the administration of these laws.

If confirmed, I intend to apply the law, as written and in accordance with the intent of Congress, in a fair and objective manner.

The ITC also plays an essential role in supporting policymakers by providing objective and high-quality economic and industry analysis. Over the course of my career as an advocate and a negotiator, I have depended from time-to-time upon the work of economists so I understand the importance of policymakers

having reliable and robust reports upon which to base their decisions. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with my fellow Commissioners and ITC staff to ensure that the ITC continues to be responsive to Congress and other policymakers, and continues to provide objective and high-quality reports.

I believe in the power of a rules-based trading system to expand trade, create jobs and raise standards of living. But simply having such a system is not enough – the rules must be enforced and the decision-maker must be independent and objective. Congress has charged the ITC with playing this critical role with regard to U.S. trade remedy laws. If confirmed, I would be honored to participate in this important process as a Commissioner.

I thank you for considering my nomination and would be happy to answer any questions.