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HATCH STATEMENT AT FINANCE COMMITTEE MARKUP ON TAX EXTENDERS LEGISLATION

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, today delivered the following opening statement at a committee markup on the *Expiring Provisions Improvement Reform and Efficiency (EXPIRE) Act*:

To begin, I just want to take a moment to express my appreciation to you, Chairman Wyden, for your work in preparing and executing this markup.

Tax extenders legislation is always difficult to move. It comes with a number of moving parts and competing interests. It is never easy.

Throughout this process, we've both worn two hats.

You've worn one hat representing the interests of the 13 Democratic members of the committee. You've also donned a hat as the senior Senator from Oregon.

Likewise, I've worn one hat as I've worked to represent the thoughts and concerns of all the Republicans on the committee, and another hat as the Senator from Utah.

In a sense, we've been brokers of the diverse interests of all the members on the committee. That has meant compromise. And, as it often does, compromise has led to some outcomes that were not optimal for you or for me.

Like I said, it hasn't been easy. But, it's important work, nonetheless.

At the outset of this process, you and I released a joint mark that represented the starting point for the tax extenders debate. I was pleased with the substance of that mark.

We made some difficult choices in the process of reaching that agreement. But, I believe we were moving in the right direction.

The last time we marked up a tax extenders package was in 2012. The bill we reported at that time represented roughly a 25 percent reduction in the number of expiring tax provisions. By reducing the number of extenders, I believe we were, as a committee, acting to eliminate wasteful and distortive provisions in our already complicated tax code.

The mark we released earlier this week continued in that same fashion by further reducing the number of extended tax provisions. That is the direction I believe we should be moving.

Obviously, the Chairman's mark we'll be amending today is different from the joint mark that we released earlier this week. And, the final product we'll be voting on at the end of this markup will likely also be different.

I expect that the committee will report a final tax extenders package today, probably with bipartisan support.

However, the substance of that package is still to be determined. That being the case, it's difficult right now to say where any of us will come down when we vote on final passage.

But, that shouldn't take away from the deliberative and thoughtful process that Chairman Wyden has utilized in putting this legislation together. Once again, Mr. Chairman, you deserve a lot of praise for how this has gone on so far.

As most of you know, over the last few years, I've loudly and repeatedly decried the deterioration of regular order here in the Senate. I believe it is vital that Senate committees fulfill their responsibilities. This is especially true of the Finance Committee, which has so many important issues under its jurisdiction.

And, regardless of the final vote tally, I believe that the Finance Committee is doing its job with regard to the tax extenders legislation.

In addition to regular order and a vibrant committee process, I believe we need to restore real debate to the Senate. That means a robust discussion of the issues and votes on various amendments.

As we've seen this week on the floor of the Senate, that type of real debate is in short supply these days.

That said, I believe we'll see a real debate in the Finance Committee today.

We're going to talk about a lot of different issues. I suspect the discussion will be spirited at times.

And, we're going to have a number of votes on amendments, some of which may be difficult votes for individual members.

This is a good thing. It's how the Senate is supposed to operate.

I want to commend you, once again, Mr. Chairman, for pursuing this process. And, I want to thank all of our colleagues here on the Finance Committee – Republicans and Democrats – for their participation in this process thus far. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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