



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

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Opening Statement of Chairman Grassley

Hearing to Consider the Nominations of

James S. Halpern for Judge of the United States Tax Court; Susan C. Schwab for Deputy United States Trade Representative at Executive Office of the President; Karan K. Bhatia for Deputy United States Trade Representative at Executive Office of the President; Franklin L. Lavin for Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade at the Department of Commerce; Clay Lowery for Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury at the Department of the Treasury

Tuesday, Oct. 18, 2005

It is my pleasure to welcome several nominees to the Finance Committee today. We have a lot of work to do here today, so I will keep my introduction short. All the nominees before us have had long distinguished careers that make them well-qualified for the positions for which they are nominated. And I am sure that all of them are eager to get started in their new roles.

First, I am pleased to welcome James S. Halpern, who has been reappointed to a second term as a Judge of the United States Tax Court. Including his exemplary service for the Tax Court, Judge Halpern has more than 33 years experience as a tax lawyer, tax teacher, and tax Judge. Highly regarded by government and private sector members of the bar, Judge Halpern has shown the intellectual leadership required by the inherent complexity of tax law.

Now, we will turn to the trade nominees. But before I introduce our international trade nominees, I would like to note two elements of trade policy that I hope they will keep in mind as they serve in their new capacities.

First, is the importance of strong monitoring and enforcement. International trade is essential for the U.S. economy. That is why I fully support efforts to enhance international trade through bilateral and multilateral trade agreements. But, we cannot lose sight of the need to ensure that our trading partners live up to their obligations under these agreements. As chairman of the Finance Committee, I strive to ensure that we abide by our trade commitments. I fully expect each of you, and this Administration, to be forceful and diligent in pursuing our rights under these agreements. The American people deserve to reap the full benefits of each trade agreement we enter into, and it is your duty to make sure that they do.

Second, I hope you will keep in mind the role of the consumers in international trade. When governments impose tariffs and other restrictions on goods and services, they increase the cost of those goods and services to consumers and limit their freedom of choice. Government tariffs and restrictions can also stifle innovation and drive up the costs of producing in this country by increasing the costs of inputs, which can needlessly inhibit our ability to compete internationally. As you develop and implement our trade policies, I urge you to not overlook the important role that consumers play.

I would now like to welcome Karan Bhatia, a second nominee for Deputy United States Trade Representative. Should he be confirmed, Mr. Bhatia will oversee our trade policy toward East Asia, South Asia, and Africa. Mr. Bhatia has over 15 years of first-hand experience in international trade, investment, and economic issues, experience that will serve him well in his new capacity.

I would also like to welcome Susan Schwab, the President's nominee for Deputy United States Trade Representative. Should she be confirmed, Ms. Schwab will help guide our nation's trade policy toward Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. Ms. Schwab has an extensive professional record of public and private service, as well as a rich understanding of international trade. The accumulated wisdom over her long legislative, corporate, and academic career, will aid her in her new role.

Ambassador Frank Lavin is the President's nominee for Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade at the Department of Commerce. Ambassador Lavin has had a long and distinguished career in both the private and public sectors, which make him a very able candidate for the job in front of him. I appreciate his record of public service and appreciate his enthusiasm to continue that work here in Washington.

And finally, I would like to introduce Clay Lowery, the President's nominee for Deputy Under Secretary for International Affairs at the Department of the Treasury. If confirmed, Mr. Lowery will formulate international policy concerning international monetary and financial affairs, trade and debt issues, and participation in international financial institutions. His strong analytic skills and wealth of experience during the past fifteen years are particularly suited to the job for which he is nominated.

That said, once again I would like to welcome all of our nominees to the Committee. I appreciate your patience with this process and am hopeful that all of these nominees may move through the Senate quickly.