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Statement of Sen. Chuck Grassley  
Committee on Finance Hearing on the Nomination Douglas Shulman as IRS Commissioner  
Tuesday, Jan. 29, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing so quickly. The position of IRS Commissioner is very important and it is vital that the position be filled as quickly as possible, given a thorough review by this Committee. I am eager to hear Mr. Shulman's testimony so I will keep my remarks short. Although he doesn't have in-depth tax expertise, Mr. Shulman brings a strong managerial background with him, and he will need all of his talents to succeed as IRS Commissioner.

I have a few basic yet significant concerns I want to touch on. The problems the IRS has with computers are legendary as well as a source of great consternation and government spending. The next Commissioner must do more to modernize the computer system used by the IRS, and spend the money to do it more effectively than has been done in the past.

Next, it is important that the IRS Commissioner be seen to be in charge of his agency, and this means that he take a hands-on approach to the Office of General Counsel. Additionally, I'm sure it will surprise no one to know that I am concerned about the tax gap, and that I consider the Private Debt Collection program an excellent way to work to close the tax gap. It is important that IRS management continues to support this valuable program. Finally, I am concerned about information I have received, that while there are not enough IRS personnel working to enforce the tax laws, the amount of time devoted by IRS employees to work for their union is greater than the average for the entire federal government.

These will be important issues for the next Commissioner. Finally, I want to mention that my staff reminds me that I have several outstanding letters to the IRS and Treasury. I am sure we will be able to work together to resolve these requests in a timely manner. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to hearing from Mr. Shulman.