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CONTACT: [Aaron Fobes](#), [Julia Lawless](#)
(202) 224-4515

Hatch Statement at Senate Finance Hearing on Treasury and HHS Nominations

WASHINGTON – Today, Finance Committee Ranking Member Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) released the following statement regarding the Senate Finance hearing on Treasury and HHS nominations:

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding today's hearing. I also want to thank our nominees for joining us.

Today we are considering the nominations of Nathan Sheets to be Under Secretary for International Affairs and Ramin Toloui to be Deputy Under Secretary for International Finance at the Treasury Department.

Both are important positions and I believe both nominees are well qualified. My staff and I have discussed our priorities with both nominees and I would like to recap some of my concerns here.

First, it is vital that Treasury be more responsive to information requests from Congress. If Congress is to effectively fulfill its constitutional role on behalf of the American people, Treasury must be more forthcoming and responsive with information than it has been in the recent past.

Both nominees have assured me that they will work to fix this problem. I certainly hope they will.

I also hope both nominees will help push the Administration to be a stronger, more public advocate on behalf of renewing Trade Promotion Authority, or TPA.

TPA is the lynchpin to our international trade agenda.

Without it, I don't think the Administration can negotiate high-standard trade agreements which will achieve the goals of Congress and be passed into law.

The Bipartisan Trade Priorities Act I introduced with former Senator Baucus along with Chairman Camp of the House Ways and Means Committee would renew TPA and outline a set of bipartisan priorities for our trade negotiators.

It is my hope that we can move on our legislation as soon as possible. It's the only way we can ensure that the ambitious trade negotiations currently underway are successful. And, the President needs to do more to get this done.

On the substance of these trade agreements, I have made it clear that no sector should be excluded from our efforts to enhance regulatory convergence as part of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations, including financial services. Financial services play an essential role in facilitating trade and investment flows. Given the central importance of the financial sector to every other aspect of industrialized economies, I do not see how financial services regulation can be excluded from a meaningful T-TIP agreement.

I also understand that, because of Treasury's intransigence on this issue, the European Union is starting to pull other sectors off the table, including audiovisual services and potentially even financial services market access.

Such an outcome would be unacceptable to me and I hope our nominees will help ensure that this does not happen.

I would also like to remind Treasury officials to keep Congress in the loop before going off to discuss important issues related to taxes and international finance in gatherings of government officials from other countries, such as the G-20 meetings.

It has too often been the case, in my view, that officials make commitments in international gatherings without adequate input from Congress.

To take just one example, representatives of the administration agreed to reorganize the IMF and subsequently dropped it on the doorstep of Congress as an international commitment that had to be honored. Making commitments of taxpayer resources for potentially risky international bailouts is something that, in my opinion, should receive Congressional input before the commitment is made, and not after.

Similarly, any international commitments relevant to U.S. tax policy ought to receive Congressional input in advance.

In addition to our two Treasury nominees, we will also consider the nomination of Maria Cancian for Assistant Secretary for Children and Families at the Department of Health and Human Services.

This key post has been without a leader for too long. I am hopeful that, if confirmed, Dr. Cancian will work in a bipartisan manner to advance key reforms needed in our child welfare and foster care system.

Child welfare reform is long over-do.

The current system is structured so that the largest percentage of federal dollars is directed to the least desirable outcome which is the removal children from their homes and placing them with strangers.

The current system also features an over-reliance on placements in group homes, which, as research overwhelmingly shows, contributes to negative outcomes for children and youth. I understand that Dr. Cancian shares my concern over group homes. I hope she will work with me to reduce the number of children who are placed in these facilities.

Finally, as the Chairman knows, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or TANF programs has not been reauthorized for years.

Progress on TANF has been stymied by the administration's refusal to withdraw the Informational Memorandum to states unilaterally granting this administration the authority to waive critical welfare work requirements.

Many of us believe that the administration does not have the authority to waive welfare work requirements. Even if the members of the administration disagree on this point, the fact remains that no state has applied for one of these waivers. The refusal to withdraw the Informational Memorandum remains a barrier to bipartisan work on TANF reauthorization. I hope that under Dr. Cancian's leadership, we can find a way forward to implementing meaningful improvements to TANF.

Thank you, once again, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to hearing from our nominees.

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