



Opening Statement of Senator Chuck Grassley
Burma Trade Sanctions Joint Resolution, Nominations
July 23, 2009

The human rights record in Burma is extremely poor. There is a pattern of government policies that suppress liberties. The abuses have been extensive, and the trend continues to worsen.

There are reportedly over 2,100 political prisoners in jail. The leader of the opposition has spent 13 out the past 20 years under house arrest.

In December 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution expressing its grave concern over human rights violations in Burma.

Burma poses serious risks to peace and security in the region. This is not the time to reward the bad actions of the illegitimate Burmese government.

We should send a strong signal to the military government that its ongoing behavior is unacceptable. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of continuing the trade sanctions against Burma for another year.

During this meeting the Committee will also consider favorably reporting the nominations of seven individuals to the full Senate for consideration. I intend to support all seven today in Committee.

However, my support for the final confirmation of Mr. Madison, nominated to be general counsel of the Treasury Department, will ultimately rest on his continued responsiveness, and the responsiveness of the department, to my questions.

I take my oversight responsibilities very seriously, and right now I am very concerned that the Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program is not getting the cooperation Congress entitled him to from the Treasury Department and that his recommendations are not being seriously considered.

Just two days ago, Mr. Barofsky testified before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, that “Although Treasury has taken some steps towards improving

transparency in TARP programs, it has repeatedly failed to adopt recommendations that SIGTARP believes are essential to providing basic transparency and fulfill Treasury's stated commitment to implement TARP "with the highest degree of accountability and transparency possible.""

This is not acceptable and I intend to keep pursuing this issue, along with questions regarding \$2.4 million in bonuses to AIG executives that are still at issue at the Department, and any bonus payments that may be paid out in the future.

Additionally, I note that Ms. Carmen Nazario, the President's nominee to be Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, is on the agenda today.

I will support Ms. Nazario's nomination moving forward. I still have an outstanding issue regarding the release of key data on state's TANF participation rates that need to be resolved. This issue will need to be resolved prior to her confirmation by the full Senate.

I'm not picking on the Treasury Department or HHS specifically here, but all government agencies, and especially agencies that have presidential nominees that come through this committee, need to know that I have always placed great importance in Congressional oversight. That is going to continue.