



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Ashley Schapitl (202) 224-4515

May 9, 2019

**Wyden Statement at Finance Committee Hearing on Deputy Social Security Commissioner
and Tax Court Judge Nominations**

As Prepared for Delivery

This morning the Finance Committee meets to discuss two important nominations. David Black is nominated to serve as Deputy Social Security Commissioner, and Emin Toro is nominated to serve as a judge on the United States Tax Court. Let me start with Mr. Black's nomination.

When you talk about Social Security, you're talking about a lifeline for 69 million Americans. They're seniors, people with disabilities, and other individuals who've earned their benefits after years of paying into the program with each and every paycheck. Every one of those 69 million people -- and the generations who will come after them -- are counting on those who run the Social Security program to maintain a high level of service.

Because of this committee and the hard work of dedicated advocates for Social Security, the agency's administrative budget has improved recently. Americans don't have to wait as long as they did a few years ago for a hearing on a disability appeal, but there's a lot more work to go. That's also the case with respect to improving and managing Social Security I.T. infrastructure.

Those are among the key challenges Mr. Black will need to address if he's confirmed. He's a qualified nominee who knows the ins and outs of the Social Security Administration.

This morning, while we consider this nomination for SSA deputy commissioner, I also want to remind the committee that Social Security has not had a confirmed commissioner in place since February 2013. Bottom line, that's far too long for the top position to go unfilled. Just like any government agency or any private business, SSA runs best when it has strong leadership with a vision for how to improve. In my judgement, the Senate should not confirm a deputy commissioner before confirming the commissioner.

Andrew Saul's nomination to serve as commissioner has been approved by this committee twice. I hope he's able to get on the job soon. I also note that, in terms of going forward on the Senate floor, it would be appropriate to take up the nomination of the commissioner before taking up the nomination of the deputy commissioner.

Now onto Emin Toro's nomination for the U.S. Tax Court. The U.S. Tax Court may not generate a whole lot of conversation over America's dinner tables, but it is the judicial backbone of the federal tax code. It's the best opportunity Americans have to dispute tax bills before they have to pay, and it keeps them from getting stuck in slow-moving courts when issues come up. The Tax Court is a big part of ensuring fairness for taxpayers, and serving as a judge is a tough job that requires a lot of time on the road. So I appreciate Mr. Toro's willingness to serve.

I want to thank both of the nominees here today, and I look forward to questions.

###