

The **UNITED STATES SENATE**
COMMITTEE *on* **FINANCE**
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Wyden Statement at Hearing on Trump Administration Nominees

As Prepared for Delivery

A video of these remarks is [here](#).

Washington, D.C. – The Finance Committee is gathered today to consider another set of Trump nominees. This hearing comes as the country has been plunged into the largest measles outbreak since the wide availability of the vaccine for this dangerous disease.

Chris Klomp has been nominated to serve as Robert Kennedy’s second in command at HHS. Mr. Klomp has been serving in that role unofficially for several months. There’s no question that Mr. Klomp is a smooth operator. But when it comes to follow through, his claims and commitments don’t live up to reality.

First, on Trump’s prescription drug deals.

In April, the members of this Committee asked Robert Kennedy to produce them , and he said Chris Klomp would help make that happen. That was five months ago, and I am still getting nothing but excuses and delays. You’d think this administration would be tripping over themselves to make the details public if they actually helped Americans who are struggling to afford their prescription drugs.

Trump’s plan on drug prices amounts to this: trust me and Big Pharma. There’s not a shred of evidence these deals have significantly lowered costs for patients. But there is ample evidence that Big Pharma got sweetheart tariff deals and boosted stock prices. Every Democrat on this Committee is on a bill to compel the release of these deals.

Next is his leadership in Medicare. Mr. Klomp told my staff that, quote: “People pay into Medicare their whole lives; it is the great social contract.” Unfortunately, he is the third Trump

nominee before this committee who has chosen to manipulate his tax payments such that he has not paid any tax into Social Security or Medicare in at least two of the last several years.

Mr. Klomp is fond of saying there's an urgent need for good stewardship in government. It sets a poor example for the self-proclaimed "leader of Medicare" not to contribute to the program like every working family who pays into Social Security and Medicare out of every paycheck.

Last is on vaccines. Mr. Klomp likes to talk about "following the evidence." However, the leadership of Robert Kennedy at HHS has demonstrated the opposite. This administration is built around drawing conclusions and fabricating evidence to fit their ideological agenda. Exhibit A is Robert Kennedy's continued lies and fear-mongering, such as the outlandish claim that the measles vaccine contains "aborted fetal debris." Later this week, Kennedy will speak before the largest anti-vaccine group in the nation. People - children - in America are dying because vaccine rates are dropping. If this administration and those in it truly followed the evidence, we would not be in the midst of a record-setting outbreak of a disease that was once eradicated.

All of this is against the backdrop of the largest cut to federal health care spending in American history, that Mr. Klomp will be charged with overseeing. One trillion dollars was slashed from Medicaid. Millions have been kicked off of their insurance, and health care premiums have risen into the stratosphere for everyone else.

In meetings with my staff, Mr. Klomp tried to paint himself as fresh leadership that will restore integrity to the department. That's hard to believe coming from an individual who's already been on the job for months, and is a member of the exclusive club where a membership fee up to \$500,000 buys you access to MAGA insiders.

Next is Ge Bai, nominated to be the assistant secretary for planning and evaluation, essentially the research arm of the Department, responsible for independent analysis to inform federal policymaking. Just like Mr. Klomp, Ms. Bai has already been serving at the agency in an acting capacity.

Several of the reports issued by the research office under Ms. Bai's leadership have called her independence into question. Two studies about health care coverage losses relied on shoddy analysis from the archconservative think tanks in an effort to downplay how many Americans would be harmed by Trump's cuts.

If confirmed, Ms. Bai's history shows she will continue to help Trump eradicate any independent oversight of his own administration.

Next up, Jim Gadwood, who has been nominated to be the chief counsel at the IRS, an epicenter of Trump's corruption.

That includes the sweetheart immunity deal that Trump secured. Right now, everyone in America is subject to a tax audit, except the president and his family. This immunity deal is a flagrant abuse of power and sets a dangerous precedent that enables the corruption that has become a calling card of Trump's administration to run rampant.

Mr. Gadwood is currently employed by a law firm that represents Donald Trump's holding company, but refuses to disclose whether the President or his family are his clients. Past nominees have all been willing to disclose their client lists to the Committee and recuse themselves from issues related to Trump; Mr. Gadwood has done neither.

And while Trump's allies run roughshod over tax laws to benefit the president, they have weaponized the IRS and illegally shared thousands of taxpayers' private information with ICE as a part of Trump's anti-immigrant ideology. The chief counsel at the IRS would be at the center of resolving this flagrant abuse of Americans' privacy.

Anyone chosen to serve as chief counsel of the IRS has been hand-picked by Trump not because of their qualifications, but because they will enable his corrupt self-dealing and look the other way while he breaks the law.

Finally, Andrew De Mello was nominated to be a tax court judge. Mr. De Mello's actions were central to some of the abuses I've just mentioned. According to court records, he approved a memo that allowed the IRS to begin sharing sensitive taxpayer information with ICE.

Mr. De Mello has also outright refused to answer some of my team's vetting questions. One of the commitments every nominee that comes before this committee must make is to respond in writing to any request made by a member of this committee. Mr. De Mello has failed to do so, and as a result, I do not believe his presence at today's hearing is legitimate.

None of the nominees being considered today have shown they have the ability – or the desire – to rein in Trump's lawlessness and dangerous agenda.

A web version of these remarks is available [here](#).

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