

STATEMENT OF IRVING A. WILLIAMSON
NOMINATED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE U.S. INTERNATIONAL TRADE
COMMISSION
Before the
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
December 5, 2006

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Senator Baucus and Members of the Committee. I particularly want to thank Senators Schumer and Clinton and Congressman Rangel for introducing me and to thank them and Senate Democratic Leader Reid and House Democratic Leader Pelosi for supporting my nomination. I also want to express my appreciation to Congressman Rangel for proposing my appointment as a Commissioner and for the support he has given me throughout my career. I am proud to be able to say that as a Harlem resident he has been my Congressman for the last 21 years.

I have been working on trade policy matters for over thirty years; I have worked in a wide variety of positions at the federal and regional government level and as head of my own international consulting firm. I hope that this long and extensive experience will make me an effective commissioner if I am confirmed.

From 1993 to 1998, I was Deputy General Counsel at the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) where I worked on the WTO and NAFTA implementing legislation. As Chairman of the interagency Section 301 Committee, I led the Committee through 24 investigations of foreign trade barriers; these investigations were conducted pursuant to the provisions in section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974. I also helped manage a 14-attorney office that was engaged in over 30 WTO dispute settlement proceedings and was named best government international law office in May of 1997.

Before USTR I worked for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey where I advised it on international trade issues. I also assisted local firms, who were clients of the Port Authority's export trading company, to deal with foreign trade barriers. I saw first hand how trade policy decisions and trade agreements affected companies in New York and New Jersey.

While a Foreign Service Officer with the State Department, I served as Associate General Counsel at USTR where I worked on a number of US-EU agricultural disputes, trade preferences legislation and East-West trade matters. From 1975 to 1978 I served in the US Mission in Geneva, Switzerland, where I was involved in international economic and trade negotiations being conducted in the GATT, the World Intellectual Property Organization and other international organizations.

As a consultant in recent years, I have worked primarily on U.S. government funded projects in over 20 countries; these projects were designed to help the

countries improve compliance with WTO obligations and to make trade policy decisions that contribute to their economic development and to their being good trade partners for the United States.

Throughout my career I have worked closely with the staff of the Commission. I have come to appreciate the importance of the Commission in helping to ensure that the Administration and the Congress have the information and analysis they need to make trade policy decisions that are in the best interest of the US economy and employment in the United States. The Commission has an important advisory role to play in the trade policy formulation process in the United States.

The Commission also has a very important role to play as an independent fact-finding body which administers provisions in our trade remedies laws and our laws dealing with foreign unfair trade practices. If confirmed, I will administer these laws as written and as Congress intended. I will seek to apply our trade laws objectively, fairly and vigorously and will not substitute any policy bias in place of congressional intent.

In my consulting assignments, I have seen how decisions regarding international trade are hampered when countries do not have an institution such as the ITC which can conduct independent investigations and make decisions or recommendations based on sound research and analysis and good information. I therefore recognize that one of the responsibilities of a Commissioner is to ensure that the Commission as an institution continues to carry out effectively for our country the important functions assigned to it.