

The **UNITED STATES SENATE**
COMMITTEE on FINANCE
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Wyden Statement at Finance Committee Business Meeting on the Nominations of Xavier Becerra for HHS, Katherine Tai for USTR and Wally Adeyemo for Treasury

As Prepared for Delivery

This morning the Finance Committee meets to tie a bow on Nominations Week with votes on three nominees. For the information of members, we plan to have the votes at noon, assuming all the members want to make statements. If some members don't make statements or have shorter statements, we will adjust the time of the vote and inform members when to come to the hearing room. And since members spent plenty of time in this hearing room last week, I'll have just a brief set of remarks this morning.

First I'd like to address the nomination of Attorney General Xavier Becerra to serve as Secretary of Health and Human Services. He served for 24 years in the Congress. He was on the committee of health care jurisdiction. He was involved in writing and debating major pieces of health care legislation including the Affordable Care Act. He's defended the ACA in court. During the pandemic he's fought to protect the health and wellbeing of all Californians, particularly nurses, doctors and other workers who find themselves in harm's way. He's got the right managerial experience, too. As California Attorney General, he's in charge of a billion dollar budget and a staff of thousands.

If there's an effort to paint the attorney general as some kind of inexperienced radical, it's not at all backed up by what the committee saw last week. Senators will always have different views than nominees of the other party. Some of those issues came up on Wednesday, including women's health care. But disagreement on some issues alone is not a good enough reason to oppose a nominee as qualified and knowledgeable as AG Becerra. It was clear, in my view, that he respects those with whom he has differences of opinion, and he wants to find common ground with all members of this committee to solve big health care challenges. I'm hopeful that we'll be able to accomplish that.

Bottom line, this country is in the middle of a public health nightmare, and the American people need to have a Senate-confirmed leader running HHS as soon as possible. HHS is right at the center of the effort to save lives and end the pandemic. There's a tough job ahead of AG Becerra, and the American people cannot afford any delay moving his nomination forward.

Next, not many hearings in the Senate feature as much bipartisan praise for nominees as Thursday's hearing on Katherine Tai's nomination to be the U.S. Trade Representative. On top of bipartisan cred, she knows precisely the kind of smarter and stronger approach this country needs on trade. Cracking

down on China's trade cheating and using the leverage of our economic allies. Rebuilding our domestic supply chains. Fighting to protect American jobs and wages and expand the economic winners' circle.

I also want to work with her on continuing to expand transparency in our trade policy. There is a lot for USTR to work on in the months and years ahead, but American workers, businesses, farmers and ranchers will be well served with Katherine Tai on the job.

Finally, Wally Adeyemo showed this committee on Tuesday why he is exactly the right choice for the number two spot at the Treasury Department under Secretary Yellen. He is committed to rebuilding our economy out of the wreckage of the pandemic unemployment crisis in a way that gives everybody a chance to get ahead.

The reality is, our economy is split in two. For those at the top, the economy is strong. But for tens of millions of working families – particularly for women, for Black and Latino workers, for those who were already walking an economic tightrope before the pandemic – the last year has been a disaster. Unemployment is at levels not seen since the Great Depression.

The Senate continues its work on these issues this week with the American Rescue Plan hitting the floor, and there's a lot more work ahead. Mr. Adeyemo will be a leader on the economic recovery and more at the Treasury Department, and I look forward to working with him.

All three of these nominees are highly qualified leaders. All three had excellent hearings last week. I will support all three nominees, and I urge my colleagues to support them as well.

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