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Opening Statement of Senator Charles E. Grassley
April 17 Hearing to Consider Pending Nominations

I want to thank each of the nominees for being here today and for their willingness to commit to public service. First, we have Ms. Deanna Tanner Okun, currently a commissioner on the United States International Trade Commission. Commissioner Okun is no stranger to the Committee. Previously she served as counsel for international affairs to Senator Frank Murkowski. The President has nominated Commissioner Okun to become Deputy United States Trade Representative with responsibility for overseeing our trade relations with Asia and Africa. This is a critically important position, and Commissioner Okun is extremely well-qualified to assume these responsibilities. I hope to see her nomination proceed expeditiously through the Senate.

Next, we will hear from Richard Morrison, who as a nominee to the U.S. Tax Court will be able to draw upon extensive work in the private sector as well as more than six years working in the Department of Justice. David Gustafson, also nominated to the Tax Court, also has extensive experience working for the Justice Department that will serve him well.

I have had the honor of working with our final Tax Court nominee since I became lead Republican on the Finance Committee. Elizabeth Crewson Paris has worked for this Committee since 2000 when Senator Roth was chairman. I want to recognize Elizabeth's father and sister, Joel and Martha, who are with us today. The clarity and intelligence Elizabeth brings to the Senate has benefited many people, and probably without most of them realizing it. In leaving her position as partner at a major law firm to take on the relentless pressures of crafting tax legislation, Elizabeth grappled with issues as diverse as the estate tax, highway and energy issues, and agriculture issues. The numerous sections of the Internal Revenue Code she has worked on touch the lives of millions of people, and those provisions are better for her involvement.

After attending the University of Tulsa, Elizabeth earned her LL.M. in Taxation from the University of Denver. An extensive and successful career in private practice gave Elizabeth the insight to shape legislation that would be workable as good tax law able to accomplish its intended purpose. She also has the personal qualities necessary to succeed in a tough and constantly changing environment. Elizabeth treats everyone with the greatest respect and makes herself available to listen to anyone who wants to share information with her, regardless of what side of an issue they are on. Working in a truly bipartisan manner, Elizabeth never hesitates to offer her guidance to any staffer or member, regardless of their political affiliation. These are not skills you learn in law school or pick

up at a continuing education seminar, but are nonetheless vital to this committee's work, and to the work of the Tax Court. I am sorry Elizabeth will no longer be working for us on the committee, but I know that taxpayers will continue to benefit from her judgment. This nomination marks the next step in a meaningful and successful career.

Elizabeth can cite chapter and verse from the Internal Revenue Code while talking real aggie talk. For instance, some of the tax staff were scratching their heads when Elizabeth used the term "cow-calf unit." Whether we're talking crops, animals, or the soil of a farm itself, Elizabeth understands the practical, legal, economic, and political implications of a proposal. I'm very grateful for that resource that she has brought to the drafting table.

I also have the pleasure of having worked with our next nominee. In fact, I spoke in support of Eric Thorson, nominated to be inspector general of the Treasury Department, when he was nominated to that same position at the Small Business Administration. Being an inspector general is a tough but important job. As law enforcement officers, IG's and their staff must investigate fraud, waste, and abuse within the government. As citizens, we depend on them to ensure that government agencies are good stewards of the resources we entrust them with. We also depend on IG's to make sure government officials do not abuse the authority we give them and engage in inappropriate and sometimes criminal behavior.

Mr. Thorson has continued to demonstrate that as a man of character and integrity, he has what it takes to protect the public interest at the Treasury Department. Before working at the Small Business Administration, Eric was chief investigator for this committee and for the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. As Treasury's top cop, Eric will prove himself to be a champion of the taxpayer, and a tireless enemy of corruption.

Our final nominee is Mr. Eck, nominated to the IRS Oversight Board. Currently dean of the University of Montana School of Law, Mr. Eck's experience in private practice and as a law professor will be of great help in assisting the IRS in implementing our tax laws while respecting the taxpayer. Thank you all for your willingness to serve.