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Hearing Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Regarding Departing Committee Members and Nominations for HHS and Treasury General Counsels
As prepared for delivery

In a speech on leadership delivered more than 100 years ago, President Theodore Roosevelt said:

“It is not the critic who counts; not the one who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done better.

“The credit belongs to the person who is naturally in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly, who errs and who comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without erring and shortcoming.

“But who does actually strive to do the deed. Who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.”

This quote hangs on a wall in my office. It serves as a powerful reminder about the importance of political leadership.

Today, I want to thank the four members of this committee who are leaving the Senate at the end of this year — Kent Conrad, Olympia Snowe, Jon Kyl and Jeff Bingaman. They have served valiantly in the arena of the United States Senate and I’d like to say a few words about each of them.

For the past 26 years, I’ve had the opportunity to work in the Senate with Kent Conrad. Kent has many of the same values that we have in Montana – he is honest, hardworking and straightforward, and he is committed to improving the future of our nation.

Kent has been a member of the Finance Committee since 1993, when he was appointed to fill the seat vacated by Lloyd Bentsen. And for the past 20 years, he has been a champion for expanding trade for farmers and ranchers, ensuring families affordable health care and working tirelessly to reduce America’s deficit and debt.

There are few people in Congress who know economic policy as well as Kent, and none match his love of charts. Whether as a member of the Gang of Six, Simpson - Bowles, the Finance Committee or at the helm of the Budget Committee, Kent has been a voice of reason on fiscal matters.

As a senior member of the Finance Committee, he also played a key role in shaping the Affordable Care Act and has been a leader in fighting for rural health care. He has also been a strong ally echoing my call

for comprehensive tax reform. A former tax commissioner, Kent will be missed as we take on this next great challenge.

Thank you Kent — we are grateful for all your hard work.

Today, we also thank my good friend from Arizona, Jon Kyl, for his long service to the American people.

Over the years, Jon has developed a reputation for hard work, leadership, and an encyclopedic knowledge of policy. He has served on the Finance Committee for more than 12 years with such persistence and tenacity, fighting for the causes he believes in.

It has not gone unnoticed. TIME Magazine named Jon one of the 100 most influential people in the world for his persuasive role in the Senate. Throughout the years, we have worked together for the good of our nation -- working to create sound policies for the American people.

Jon has been passionate about many issues. Maybe none more so than the estate tax. Jon has worked across the aisle with me and others to protect America's family-owned small businesses, farms and ranches from the burden of the estate tax. Jon's skills as an advocate on the issue are unmatched.

We will miss Senator Kyl's perspective and his strong representation of the citizens of Arizona and, even more so, the American people.

At the end of this year, the Senate will lose another great statesman, and New Mexicans will lose an extremely effective legislator in Jeff Bingaman.

Jeff has been a tireless advocate on health care, Native American and energy issues. He is the Chairman of the Energy and Natural Resource Committee and is responsible for some of the most important energy policies on the books.

On this committee, he authored the advanced biofuel tax credits and led the effort to improve energy efficiency incentives. His ideas have helped set the course for this committee to work on energy tax reform.

On health care, Jeff and I have accomplished much together. He was vital to the Children's Health Insurance Program — or CHIP — and the health reform legislation. He also worked tirelessly to simplify and streamline enrollment in Medicaid and the children's health care program, and ensured Indian health was included as well.

Jeff is a work horse, not a show horse. He thinks long and hard about the issue, figures out the best policy and gets it done. And after it's completed, he quietly moves right on to the next challenge.

Jeff doesn't seek out credit or a pat on the back. That is just his personality. Well today, you can't avoid the recognition, Jeff. We are giving you the credit you deserve.

Senator Olympia Snowe is another member more interested in progress than politics. She has demonstrated over and over that ideological purity should not prevent Washington from tackling the great challenges of our country.

We will miss Olympia's thoughtful approach to building bridges and crafting compromise.

From her start on the committee in the 107th Congress, Olympia worked to form consensus.

That January, we were addressing the 2001 tax cuts proposed by President Bush. Olympia worked with all members of the committee — especially Democratic Senator Blanche Lincoln — to strengthen the child tax credit. I know she is proud of that work, an effort to help the poorest of children.

More recently, Olympia worked with me as part of a bipartisan group to create the foundation of health care reform. I remember appreciating how detail-oriented Olympia is. Always taking notes, highlighting passages, focusing on every detail and always looking out for her constituents back home in Maine.

Olympia is one class act. And as the longest serving and highest ranking woman to serve on the committee, she has set a great example for all those who follow. We thank you for your service, Olympia.

Over time, each of these four Senators has made their mark. Each has had an impact on this committee and on this Congress. They have — as Roosevelt said — been in the arena and made a tremendous difference to our nation.

I also want to acknowledge the work of our friend Mark Matthiesen, who recently announced his retirement. For the past 31 years, Mark worked on tax legislation in the office of the Senate Legislative Counsel.

The Senate community regularly relies on Mark's expertise, and while we wish him the very best in retirement, this committee will miss him.

And on a final note, earlier today I announced that our friend, who all of you know and love — Russ Sullivan, will be leaving the Senate at the end of this Congress. He has been a true friend and respected colleague for the last 18 years. I know I speak for all of us in wishing him the best in his future endeavors.

While Russ will be greatly missed, we are fortunate to have Amber Cottle taking on this leadership role. You all recognize her as she has been with me for close to six years as one of my closest advisors. Amber is a proven problem solver who works across party lines to get results. She is exactly the type of person I want leading my team for years to come.

Woodrow Wilson once said, "I not only use all the brains that I have, but all that I can borrow."

This administration, like all administrations, faces a great number of challenges. They need a great number of bright and talented people to work together to find solutions. The two nominees before us here today are among the best and the brightest. They seek to be the general counsels of the Department of Treasury and the Department of Health and Human Services. These agencies will depend on their advice and expertise for implementing laws and forming our country's economic and health policy.

In August, President Obama nominated Christopher Meade to be the General Counsel at the Department of Treasury. Mr. Meade came to Treasury in 2010, and this summer took over as the Acting General Counsel. This experience, and his trusted knowledge of the law, will serve him well.

After graduating from Princeton and then NYU Law School, Mr. Meade clerked for Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens. Years later, he returned to the Supreme Court to argue four high profile cases on behalf of his clients. In reviewing his career, a consistent theme is apparent: He is respected, trusted and Mr. Meade knows the law.

If confirmed, Mr. Meade will use his experience to counsel the secretary and all at the Treasury Department on economic and financial affairs, both domestic and international. These policies affect every person in America, and Mr. Meade's sound judgment is essential.

President Obama selected William Schultz to be the General Counsel at the Department of Health and Human Services. This position demands a high level of expertise to assist in the analysis and implementation of our nation's health care laws.

A graduate of Yale and then UVA Law School, Mr. Schultz gained expertise through a long and varied career, much of it in public service. He currently serves as Acting General Counsel at HHS. He came to the agency in 2011 after working at the Department of Justice, the FDA, and in the private sector.

Mr. Schultz was a well-respected professor at Georgetown Law, sharing his knowledge with hundreds of students. He's published many scholarly articles throughout the years covering issues from the FDA to the Supreme Court. His writings have appeared in the New York Times and the Georgetown Law Journal.

Both Mr. Schultz and Mr. Meade must bring thoughtfulness and a command of the law to their respective agencies. Their records show them to be qualified for these positions. I believe the administration will benefit from borrowing the knowledge, experience and perspective both nominees possess.

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