

The National Council of Social Security Management Associations, Inc.
GREYSTONE GROUP WASHINGTON REPORT
Legislative Report 18-2010
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NOMINATION HEARING

Overview

On Thursday, December 9, 2010, the Senate Committee on Finance held a hearing to consider the nomination of Carolyn W. Colvin to be Deputy Commissioner of Social Security. The hearing was presided over by Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) and was the last scheduled piece of official business the committee will take up for 2010. The hearing marked the last time the current Ranking Member, Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA) will hold a leadership position on the committee. Over the past 10 years, Senator Grassley has served as both Ranking Member and Chairman. Due to a committee term limit rule enforced by the Republican Party, Senator Grassley will become the Ranking Member of the Senate Judiciary Committee in the 112th Congress, which convenes in January 2011. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) will serve as the Ranking Member on the Senate Committee on Finance.

Panel 1

- **Senator Benjamin Cardin (D-MD)**
United States Senate
- **Carolyn W. Colvin**
Nominee to be Deputy Commissioner of Social Security

Opening Statements

The hearing began with a brief opening statement from Chairman Baucus. He stressed the important role the Social Security program plays in the lives of so many Americans and that currently the Social Security Administration is facing many challenges.

Of those challenges, the Chairman expressed the most concern about the disability backlogs, and the current increase in claims stemming from the recent economic downturn. Chairman Baucus has long been a supporter of reducing the number of backlogged disability cases over the past number of years. The Chairman added that backlogged disability cases are something that simply can not be tolerated.

He also stressed the importance of reenergizing the Ticket to Work Program. He stated that programs like this one and so many others are essential when workloads increase at the same time operating budgets shrink due to mounting debt.

In closing the Chairman strongly urged nominee Colvin, if she is confirmed, to listen to the management associations and unions as they are all stakeholders in this program. He stated that it is important that they are heard.

The following is a link to Chairman Baucus's opening statement:

<http://finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/12092010%20Baucus%20Hearing%20Statement%20Regarding%20the%20Nomination%20of%20Carolyn%20Colvin%20to%20be%20Deputy%20Commissioner%20of%20Social%20Security.pdf>

Ranking Member Grassley then offered a brief opening statement. His statement focused on the challenges the agency is facing and will continue to face, given the likelihood that federal budgets could shrink because of mounting federal debt. He stressed that few agencies do so much with so little, like the Social Security Administration, but as times get tough, the agency is going to need to continue to find ways to increase efficiencies.

The following is a link to Ranking Member Grassley's opening statement:

<http://finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/nominations%2012-9-10%20hearing%20on%20deputy%20commissioner%20Social%20Security%20commissioner.pdf>

Following Ranking Member Grassley's opening statement, members of the panel then presented their five-minute statements. The first to speak was Senator Benjamin Cardin (D-MD). He made only a few brief comments in support of the nominee, and then in typical nomination hearing fashion presented the nominee to the committee, as she resides in Maryland.

Following Senator Cardin's remarks, the nominee, Carolyn W. Colvin offered her statement. She used her time before the committee to address her credentials and background and how they are perfectly tailored to allow her to effectively handle this position. She also briefly discussed some of the challenges facing the agency, specifically the disability backlogs, and the need to increase Internet usage.

The following is a link to nominee Carolyn W. Colvin's opening statement:

<http://finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Finance%20Colvin%2012%207%202010.pdf>

Question and Answer Session

The question and answer portion of the hearing was fairly brief and to the point. As is typical in nomination hearings, the Chairman began the Q&A session by asking the standard three questions that are asked of all nominees; will accepting this job cause any conflict of interest for you; is there any reason you would not be able to carry out your duties in the job; and will you be responsive to Congress on all requests made?

During the question and answer session nominee Colvin was asked what she sees as the most urgent issues currently facing the agency. She answered that currently the most urgent issue is that of the disability backlog. She stated that there are really three major components that play into the backlog: resources; increased Internet efficiency; and performance management. She went on to add that program integrity and solvency are other issues currently of concern for the agency.

The question and answer session was concluded with Senator Thomas Carper (D-DE) inquiring about SSA's overpayments, stressing to nominee Colvin the importance of reducing the number of improper payments, and recovering improper payments.

From the nomination hearing it seemed there would be few if any members that would vote against the nomination of Carolyn W. Colvin, for Deputy Commissioner of Social Security. We will update you as to when a vote before the full Senate is scheduled on this nomination.

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