

Ranking Member Pat Toomey (R-Pa.)
Opening Statement
Full Committee Hearing: Nomination Hearing
September 21, 2021 at 10:00 AM

Mr. Chairman, thank you. Mr. Estevez, Ms. Kendler, Ms. Latortue, and Mr. Steele, welcome. You've been nominated for important positions.

Before turning to today's nominees, I'd like to register my disappointment that Democrats are still trying to ram through a reckless \$3.5 trillion tax-and-spending bill, despite reservations from members of their own caucus. Given the profound impact of this bill, the Republicans on this Committee have requested that we hold hearings and a markup. Unfortunately, Senate Democrats have no plans to do that.

I fear that's because the bill is going to include many flawed policies that will harm economic growth and jobs while invading the privacy of Americans. These include massively expanding the welfare state in an effort to make the middle class dependent on the federal government, raising taxes on U.S. employers, diminishing investment by increasing the capital gains tax rate, increasing the electric vehicle tax credit that benefits the wealthy and making this tax giveaway even bigger for union-made cars, and giving the IRS, an agency with a history of abuse, access to our bank account information.

Those are just some of the destructive policies being advanced and I wish Democrats would allow them to get a full debate here at the Committee.

Now, turning to today's nominees. Mr. Estevez and Ms. Kendler, you would serve in Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security, known as BIS. BIS determines which U.S. goods are too sensitive to be shipped abroad.

In the face of China's drive for dominance in key tech sectors, BIS's mission today is as important as ever. By setting U.S. export control policy on items used for both civilian and military purposes, BIS effectively has the power to reshape the supply chains of entire industries.

That means BIS must craft export controls in a prudent, thoughtful, and effective manner that advances U.S. national security interests without unduly harming American domestic industry. This challenge is typified by

BIS's efforts to impose congressionally mandated controls on "emerging and foundational technologies," which I would expect you to prioritize.

BIS is also responsible for Section 232 investigations. This statute is intended to prevent the importation of goods to the U.S. that threaten national security. Unfortunately, it has recently been abused to protect favored domestic industries.

Does anyone truly think a Volvo station wagon is a national security threat, as the last administration claimed? Tariffs on imported goods are taxes paid by American consumers. These taxes weaken our economy, threaten American jobs, and erode our credibility with other nations.

You should urge the president to reverse the last administration's mistakes by removing the current Section 232 tariffs harming our relationships with our allies, and stopping the abuse of Section 232.

Now to the Treasury nominees. Ms. Latortue has been nominated to serve as Assistant Secretary for International Markets. This position's responsibilities include helping oversee U.S. assistance for developing countries.

Ms. Latortue has considerable experience in this area. But I have questions about the priority she's placed on climate change at the Millennium Challenge Corporation, known as the MCC.

According to the MCC's authorizing statute, its assistance is supposed to focus on "achieving lasting economic growth and poverty reduction." The MCC should prioritize this mission, not other agendas. By doing so, it will help developing countries improve their environments, as the most prosperous nations in the world are also the "greenest" ones.

Finally, Mr. Steele has been nominated to serve as Assistant Secretary for Financial Institutions. I appreciate his past service as a Committee staffer. But I'm troubled that his nomination is another example of President Biden campaigning as a centrist, but governing from the far Left.

Mr. Steele has repeatedly advocated for using extra-legal measures to achieve extreme policies. Despite the absence of statutory authorization, he has proposed having bank regulators forbid financial institutions from

making loans to perfectly legal, and economically necessary, enterprises in the energy space.

He's advocated for an aggressively using the Financial Stability Oversight Council to designate financial firms as systemically important apparently in order to subject them to burdensome regulations—including climate regulations—even when it's doubtful that they present a systemic risk.

He's also proposed that federal agencies radically reinterpret or abuse their authorities to withhold FDIC deposit insurance from institutions offering products he deems too complex, politicize the Fed to pursue a progressive social agenda and to socialize banking by having the Federal government control consumer bank accounts, and unilaterally establish a government-run credit reporting agency within the CFPB.

I'm particularly troubled by these extreme positions, in light of Mr. Steele's statements disparaging Republicans. He has referred to Republicans as "callous" and "absolutely villainous," and suggested Republicans only use the "full force of their investigative and procedural power in service of the wealthy and white folks." These statements raise questions about his temperament, judgment, and willingness to work across the aisle.

Let me close by saying: I disagree with President Biden's nominees on policy matters far more often than I agree with them. Nonetheless, I've supported multiple nominees and will continue to do so. But there are limits to that support.

I look forward to hearing from today's nominees.