

OPENING STATEMENT

SENATOR BOB DOLE

FEBRUARY 25, 1983

IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE FOR ME TO WELCOME TO THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE MARGARET M. HECKLER AND JOHN A. SVAHN, WHO HAVE BEEN NOMINATED TO BE SECRETARY AND UNDERSECRETARY, RESPECTIVELY, OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO WELCOME MRS. HECKLER'S DAUGHTERS, BELINDA AND ELISON. ALSO WITH US ARE MR. SVAHN'S WIFE JILL, AND THEIR CHILDREN, JOHN AND KIRSTEN. IN ADDITION, LET ME WELCOME THE SENIOR SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS, THE SENATOR FROM FLORIDA, AND MY FELLOW SENATOR FROM KANSAS, ALL OF WHOM WILL BE INTRODUCING THE NOMINEE FOR SECRETARY. WE ARE DELIGHTED TO HAVE YOU ALL HERE.

I'M SURE MANY OF MY COLLEAGUES ARE FAMILIAR WITH MRS. HECKLER'S WORK DURING HER YEARS IN CONGRESS, AS I AM, AND CAN FULLY APPRECIATE THE ENORMOUS TASK WHICH LIES BEFORE HER. HAVING BEEN NOMINATED TO THE POST OF SECRETARY, SHE IS PREPARING TO HEAD THE LARGEST GOVERNMENT AGENCY IN THE UNITED STATES, WITH A BUDGET RANKED THIRD LARGEST IN THE WORLD. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE PROGRAMS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES WHICH ARE OF GREAT INTEREST TO THE FINANCE COMMITTEE; PARTICULARLY THE SOCIAL SECURITY, MEDICARE, AND MEDICAID PROGRAMS. I LOOK FORWARD TO OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH MRS. HECKLER ON SOME OF THESE MATTERS THIS MORNING.

MR. SVAHN, AS I AM SURE MY COLLEAGUES ARE AWARE, IS CURRENTLY COMMISSIONER OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION. WE HAVE WORKED CLOSELY WITH MR. SVAHN IN HIS PRESENT CAPACITY OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS IN OUR EFFORTS TO SECURE THE FINANCIAL HEALTH OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAM, AND HAVE FOUND HIM TO BE OF GREAT ASSISTANCE TO US. MR. SVAHN BRINGS WITH HIM TO THE POSITION OF UNDERSECRETARY EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE ADMINISTERING A LARGE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM, EXPERIENCE HE WILL SURELY FIND HELPFUL IN ASSISTING THE NEW SECRETARY.

I BELIEVE THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE HAVE ALL BEEN PROVIDED WITH THE BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL ON MRS. HECKLER AND MR. SVAHN.

I WOULD ALSO SAY THAT I HAVE REVIEWED THE DISCLOSURE FORMS FOR THE TWO NOMINEES, AND THE MATERIAL THAT MRS. HECKLER AND MR. SVAHN HAVE FILED WITH THE OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT ETHICS. I AM SATISFIED THAT THERE ARE NO PROBLEMS IN THIS AREA. I HAVE ALSO BEEN INFORMED THAT THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT ETHICS HAS SENT A LETTER APPROVING BOTH NOMINEES' COMPLIANCE WITH THE ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT ACT. THAT LETTER WILL BE MADE A PART OF THE RECORD. I HAVE SEVERAL QUESTIONS, WHICH I WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS WITH YOU FOLLOWING YOUR STATEMENTS.