

**Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson  
Business Meeting, March 15, 2017**

*As prepared for delivery:*

Good morning.

This is our first legislative business meeting this Congress. I'm looking forward to working with our four new members and ten returning members to advance our shared mission: enhancing the economic and national security of America and promoting a more efficient, effective, and accountable government. That starts by focusing on areas of agreement.

I am proud that we are focusing today's business meeting on protecting those who blow the whistle about waste, fraud and abuse in the federal government. The Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017 is particularly special to me, as it honors the late Dr. Kirkpatrick, who was a psychologist at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Tomah, Wisconsin. Dr. Kirkpatrick was fired for speaking up about life-threatening prescription practices at the facility. Tragically, he took his own life the same day. The Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick Whistleblower Protection Act and two other bills on today's agenda – the Office of Special Counsel Reauthorization Act of 2017 and the Follow the Rules Act – will strengthen and expand whistleblower protections, guard against retaliation, and ensure the federal office in charge of investigating whistleblower retaliation has the authorities, documents, and tools it needs to do its job.

Once again we will advance important legislation to promote more efficient and accountable government. In addition to several new bills, the Taxpayers Right-to-Know Act, EGO Act, and Modernizing Government Travel Act are bills that this Committee approved last Congress but unfortunately did not make it to the President's desk. I am committed to promptly getting these bills to the floor to ensure that these transparency and cost-saving measures become law.

Finally, we will take an important vote to help get senior leadership in place at the Department of Homeland Security. Elaine Duke has many years of management experience at DHS, and the bipartisan support of our Committee. I hope our colleagues in the Senate will act swiftly to confirm her nomination.