

Opening Statement of Chairman Thomas R. Carper

Nomination of Howard A. Shelanski to be Administrator, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget June 12, 2013

As prepared for delivery:

Today we meet to consider the nomination of Howard Shelanski, President's Obama's choice to serve as Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (-- an office that we usually call by its acronym, "OIRA").

This important office within the Office of Management and Budget has been without a Senate-confirmed leader since last August, when then Administrator Cass Sunstein left government service. I am therefore very pleased that the President has nominated someone who I believe is highly qualified, and I intend to work with my colleagues on this Committee to complete our review and to report the nomination for action by the full Senate as soon as we can.

Although OIRA is not well known outside of Washington, it has a very important role across the government and in our daily lives.

Congress passes laws that draw lines between what is acceptable and unacceptable in our society, whether it's to protect our public health, the economy, or the natural environment.

But we in Congress cannot cover every situation in the legislation we pass, so we leave many of the particulars to the regulatory process.

For many years, Presidents have asked OIRA to help oversee and coordinate our regulatory process and to review the most important proposed rules. Americans are impacted by the decisions and actions of OIRA every time they take a drink of water or go to the bank.

Although some people think we need to choose between regulation and having a robust, growing economy, I disagree. I believe that federal regulations should only be issued when there is a real need, when they are cost-effective, and when they make sense. When these conditions are satisfied, federal regulation serves an essential purpose in protecting the environment, health, safety, consumers, and our financial system.

For example, by advocating a common-sense, cost-effective approach to our nation's environmental and energy challenges, we can reduce harmful pollutants, lead healthier lives, lower our energy costs, and help put Americans to work manufacturing new products.

OIRA has also been tasked with coordinating agencies' reviews of their existing regulations, in order to explore whether any should be modified, streamlined, expanded, or repealed so as to make the agency's regulatory program more effective or less burdensome.

Furthermore, OIRA, together with the Office of E-Government and OMB as a whole, has important responsibility in managing the government's immense information resources. The OIRA Administrator also has responsibility for implementing the Privacy Act of 1974, which

governs the collection, maintenance, use, and dissemination of information about individuals maintained by federal agencies, such as the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Social Security Administration, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and the Office of Personnel Management.

The head of OIRA thus has several critical roles in determining how citizens will interact with their government.

I am pleased that the President has presented us with a nominee with the training and experience to take on these important challenges.

Mr. Shelanski has earned both a law degree and a Ph.D. in economics from the University of California at Berkeley. This combined training and expertise in law and economics should be especially valuable in his role at OIRA of helping ensure that our federal regulatory programs both conform to law and achieve the best practical results for the American people.

Mr. Shelanski comes well prepared to take on the challenges of this position from his extensive government service – first as Senior Economist for President Clinton’s Council of Economic Advisors, then as Chief Economist at the Federal Communications Commission, and more recently as a manager within the Federal Trade Commission’s Bureau of Economics, which he has headed since May of 2012.

While not serving in the government, Mr. Shelanski has also had a distinguished career in academia, first as a professor at the University of California at Berkeley – his alma mater – and later at Georgetown University Law Center. And – as another indication of both Mr. Shelanski’s intellect and breadth of experience – he began his legal career as a law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Shelanski has earned a reputation among those he’s worked with of being not only very smart, but also articulate and highly collegial – qualities of character that will serve him well at a place like OIRA at the heart of government.

So my recommendation to my colleagues on this Committee is that we support this nomination and promptly report it to the full Senate.

Mr. Shelanski, we welcome you before this Committee and look forward to your testimony.