

OPENING STATEMENT



Comments by Chairman Fred Thompson (R-TN) at the Business Meeting on Wednesday, May 23, 2001

I. Nomination of John Graham

I would first like to consider the nomination of John D. Graham to be Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs.

This nomination has been considered through the regular Committee process. Based on information collected by Committee staff, letters and other documents received by the Committee, and hearing testimony, I believe that Dr. Graham is highly qualified for this position.

Dr. Graham has been a Professor of Policy & Decision Sciences at the Harvard School of Public Health since 1985. He is founder and Director of the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis and has worked with various federal agencies on related issues through his research, advisory committees, and as a consultant. He holds a Bachelor’s degree in Economics and Politics from Wake Forest University, a Master’s degree in Public Affairs from Duke University and a Ph.D. in Urban and Public Affairs from Carnegie Mellon University with an emphasis on decision science. In addition, EPA funded his post-doctoral fellowship in environmental science and public policy and he completed course work and research training in human health risk assessment. It is interesting to note that the two previous Administrators of OIRA were attorneys and had only legal backgrounds. Dr. Graham has received testimonials from former OIRA administrators, both Republican and Democratic administrations, as well as from hundreds of leaders in environmental policy, health policy and related fields. I think we are fortunate to have a nominee with a strong analytical background related to the duties of OIRA Administrator.

Opponents of Dr. Graham have charged that corporations helped fund his Center at Harvard, but we have shown numerous instances where the Center made findings that ran contrary to the interests of corporate donors. He was charged with nondisclosure, but the record shows that Harvard and the

Harvard Center go beyond the norm of similar organizations. He was charged with being in the pocket of big tobacco, and the record shows that he cited smoking as a great public health risk on many occasions and argued that more should be done to curtail it. These charges have been taken out of context in a very complicated area.

It is said that he said that safe housing codes can kill. What his study found was that the future building codes have caused the price of new homes to rise, and many middle-income and poor families will have to stay in their existing dwellings longer. These older dwellings and apartments have many hazards that do not exist in the new homes. So we had a two-and-a-half-hour hearing where all of this was vetted, and I think he is one of the most qualified candidates for this position that we have ever had.

I think it is important to remember, as Dr. Graham testified at his hearing, that many of the things that he has written about have to do with cost-benefit analysis, that it should be properly done, and at the front end of the process. By the time it gets to him as OIRA Administrator, a lot of that work will have already been done. He clearly sees the distinction between an academic study, where you should look at this on the front end of the process and weigh all of these factors, and what his job as OIRA Administrator would be.

In addition, he is not always talking in favor of less regulation.. What he has spent quite a bit of time on is pointing out that if we have finite resources, it makes no sense to be spending money on "X," with a little bit of protection, when we could be spending money on "Y," with more protection. It is not a matter of less regulation all of the time; it is a matter of more effective regulation. And I hope that we do not get to the point where we discourage robust academic discussion if it does not fit in with 51 percent of the thinking, and certainly the more politically correct thinking, at all times.

I think the proof ultimately is with his peers. All of his studies are peer-reviewed. All of his studies that are funded by private sources have two or three people on those studies, not just him by himself. And then, ultimately, you have all of these people coming forth, from both sides of the aisle, including the environmental community, supporting him. I am confident that Dr. Graham will effectively be able to transition from academia

to government service and that he will be able to use his background to bring more insight to the issues that confront OIRA everyday.

II. Other Nominations to be Considered

I would next like to consider en bloc the nominations of Angela B. Styles to be Administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy, Stephen A. Perry to be Administrator of the General Services Administration, Maurice A. Ross to be Associate Judge of the District of Columbia Superior Court, and Erik Patrick Christian to be Associate Judge of the District of Columbia Superior Court.

These nominations have been considered through the regular Committee process. Senator Voinovich chaired the hearing for the two judicial nominations yesterday. I believe these are four well qualified nominees and I am unaware of any objections.

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