

TESTIMONY BEFORE
THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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Chairman Baucus, Senator Grassley, distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to come before the Senate Finance Committee. I sincerely appreciate your consideration of my nomination.

Please allow me to begin by introducing my wife, Christine. Everyone tells me I will have a tough job out here, but Chris has certainly had the tougher job. While I've been here the past four months, she's been back in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, caring for our three children, Brendan, Patrick and Maggie. She's been taking care of their schooling, a first communion, the soccer practices, the school trips, the doctor's appointments and the fears of moving. On top of that, she had to get the house ready for sale by herself, go through the entire sale process alone and do the packing and moving by herself. She's an amazing woman, and there's no way I would be before you today if God hadn't blessed me with the good fortune of meeting her. Of course, she's probably thinking she should have run the other way when she had the chance.

I would also like to introduce my parents, Bill and Mary Keane, who come here today from Geneva, Illinois, outside Chicago. A guy couldn't ask for two better parents. They've taught me well, supported my endeavors and given me a strong set of values to guide me through life. I thank them for all they have done for me.

Finally, I would like to thank President Bush and Secretary Thompson for their confidence in nominating me to this position. It's a great honor and an even greater responsibility, and if confirmed, I certainly don't plan to let either of them down.

Mr. Chairman, I humbly come before you today seeking Senate confirmation for my nomination as Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services. If confirmed to this position, I would oversee an immediate staff of 35 employees in a public affairs office charged with communicating and marketing HHS programs and initiatives. I would also functionally manage public affairs offices in each of the department's agencies as well as coordinate outreach to the groups and constituents the department serves. During the past four months, I have come to realize I would have the good fortune of working with the most dedicated and professional public servants in the department.

Secretary Thompson calls the Department of Health and Human Services the "Department of Compassion." We are all being given a remarkable opportunity to help people – whether it be with greater access to health care, safer foods and consumer products, or new medicines that wipe away our most hideous diseases.

The Secretary plans to aggressively take advantage of this opportunity. He's instilling a can-do attitude for finding ways to better help and serve the people of America. He wants to solve problems with common sense solutions. What excites me is that there is no better place to be for such a mission than in the Office of Public Affairs. We're in the center of the action.

The Secretary is setting high expectations for himself and his department to get things done. And he's instilled in his staff a strong ethic for working hard and delivering results. He's also passed on to us advice from his father, who often told him: "You have two ears and one mouth, use them in that proportion and you'll do just fine."

So to members of this committee, the Senate and the Congress, if I am confirmed and there is ever anything that I can do to be helpful to you or your staffs, please let me know. I'm all ears. And working together, our department will deliver results.

In closing, it is truly an honor to be nominated for this position and testify before this committee. It is not often one gets the chance to serve his president and this is an opportunity I don't take lightly.

We came here to make a difference. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with this dedicated committee to do just that, if you see fit to confirm my nomination.

Thank you for your time and consideration.