



Coalition for Sensible Safeguards Press Release

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OIRA nominee Howard Shelanski faces test: will he pledge major reforms to rejuvenate regulatory system, serve the public?

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Responding to the White House’s announcement Thursday of President Barack Obama’s intention to nominate Howard Shelanski to be the administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), leaders of the Coalition for Sensible Safeguards (CSS) issued the following statements:

Robert Weissman, president of Public Citizen and CSS co-chair: “Right now, OIRA is stalling food safety rules, worker safety rules and energy efficiency standards, in some cases flouting legal deadlines set by Congress, and typically with no explanation. Industry interests go to OIRA as a last resort when a federal agency is preparing to issue a rule that might inconvenience them. OIRA’s role has been to weaken regulations, never strengthen them. Senators should ask Shelanski if he will encourage strong, protective rules and end lengthy delays if confirmed.”

Katherine McFate, president and CEO of the Center for Effective Government and CSS co-chair: “We need an OIRA administrator dedicated to the public’s interest, someone with a proactive vision for tackling health and safety threats. We need someone who will look at the Texas fertilizer plant explosion, the BP oil spill, the financial collapse and ask, ‘What kinds of rules do we need in place to prevent this from happening in the future?’”

Ross Eisenbrey, vice president, Economic Policy Institute: “Too often, OIRA has been the place that regulations, even those whose measured benefits far outweighed the costs, went to die. The next administrator should respect the agencies’ expertise and help them fulfill their statutory missions, not impede them. OIRA is not a super-agency or the handmaiden of industry, and it should never act that way.”

Rachel Weintraub, legislative director and senior counsel at Consumer Federation of America: “Consumers need and expect a regulatory system to function effectively and efficiently

to protect them from predatory financial schemes, dangerous consumer products and food, and costly, anti-competitive practices. We need OIRA and its leadership to prioritize those goals and lead the way for the implementation of necessary consumer protections.”

Celia Wexler, senior Washington representative for the Center for Science and Democracy, Union of Concerned Scientists: “We hope that the next OIRA Administrator appreciates the expertise of the federal scientists whose work helps federal agencies protect public health and the environment. In the past, OIRA scrutiny has often made it more difficult for science-based public protections to move forward. We hope those days are over.”

Virginia Robnett, CSS coalition coordinator: “If Mr. Shelanski is confirmed, we look forward to working with him to improve OIRA’s performance when it comes to protecting the public from existing public health and safety threats. His first priority should be to address the ever-growing backlog of rules currently under review at OIRA, one of the most significant backlogs in OIRA’s history. We hope Shelanski would prove to be someone dedicated to supporting the agencies that protect our air, give us clean water and protect our economy.”

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The Coalition for Sensible Safeguards is an alliance of consumer, small business, labor, scientific, research, good government, faith, community, health, environmental, and public interest groups, as well as concerned individuals, joined in the belief that our country’s system of regulatory safeguards provides a stable framework that secures our quality of life and paves the way for a sound economy that benefits us all. For more information about the coalition, see http://www.sensiblesafeguards.org/about_us.