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SENATE HELP COMMITTEE APPROVES NOMINEES FOR LABOR SOLICITOR, SURGEON GENERAL, MINE SAFETY AND LABOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR POLICY

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension (HELP) Committee, today announced that the Committee had approved the following pending nominations and sent them to the full Senate for consideration:

M. Patricia Smith, of New York, to be Solicitor at the U.S. Department of Labor
Joseph Albert Main, of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health;
William Edward Spriggs, of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary for Policy, Department of Labor;
and
Dr. Regina Benjamin, of Alabama, to be Surgeon General.

"Today, the HELP Committee sent four strong nominations to the full Senate for consideration, and in doing so, took a major step toward protecting working families, increasing mine safety and supporting the nation's health and wellbeing," said Harkin. "I urge a speedy consideration by the full Senate so we can fill these urgently needed positions.

"If confirmed, Patricia Smith will make an outstanding Solicitor of Labor," Harkin continued. "She has a deep knowledge of labor issues and an exemplary record of public service on behalf of working families. Her expertise is needed now more than ever, particularly in this economy when American workers are struggling and deserve a strong advocate. With over 30 years of experience in enforcing labor laws and a proven track-record of managing a multi-level agency, she should be confirmed."

"We are particularly eager to see someone confirmed at MSHA and Mr. Joseph Main, is well-qualified to serve the Mine Safety and Health Administration. And as the Department of Labor continues to fill vital positions, Professor William Spriggs should be confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Policy. Both have strong, bipartisan support.

"I am personally encouraged by Dr. Regina Benjamin's commitment to prevention and wellness. With the health reform legislation putting a sharp new emphasis on prevention and public health, we could not ask for a more dedicated or committed Surgeon General."