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Vilsack part of week of Senate confirmation hearings

By Agri-Pulse Staff

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Starting with President-elect Obama's nominees for Secretary of State and Secretary of Energy, the Senate will focus on back-to-back hearings for new Cabinet members all this week. The pay-off, as explained by Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) who chairs the Senate Energy Committee which holds hearings Tuesday on Dr. Steven Chu to be Secretary of Energy, is that the hearings give senators and the public an opportunity to hear more details about policy changes likely under the Obama administration.

With regular procedure, Senate action on nominations is triggered by the President's submission of a nomination to the Senate. Prior to Jan. 20, a President-elect does not have the authority to submit nominations to the Senate. That power is held by the sitting President until the new President is sworn in. During recent transitions, however, the Senate has developed a flexible, informal process to allow quick action on nominations to Cabinet and other high-level jobs, developing a method for allowing its committees to act on an "anticipated" or "expected" nomination. Senate committees held hearings on most nominations to Cabinet positions at the outset of the Reagan, Clinton and George W. Bush administrations before inauguration day.

To enable the new administration to "hit the ground running" as promised, Senate committees will hold the following confirmation hearings this week:

Tuesday Jan. 13

- Senate Foreign Relations Committee, **Hillary Clinton to be Secretary of State**
- Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources, **Dr. Steven Chu to be Secretary of Energy**
- Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, **Arne Duncan to be Secretary of Education**
- Senate Budget Committee, **Dr. Peter R. Orszag to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget & Robert L. Nabors to be Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget**

- Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee, **Shaun Donovan to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development**

Wednesday Jan. 14

- Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, **Eric Shinseki to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs**
- Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, nomination of former Iowa **Governor Tom Vilsack to be the Secretary of Agriculture**
- Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, **Lisa P. Jackson to be Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency & Nancy Helen Sutley to be Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality**
- Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, **Dr. Peter R. Orszag to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget & Robert L. Nabors to be Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget**

Thursday Jan. 15

- Senate Judiciary Committee, **Eric H. Holder Jr. to be Attorney General**
- Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources, **Sen. Ken Salazar to be Secretary of the Interior**
- Senate Foreign Relations Committee, **Susan Rice to be U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations**
- Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, **Janet A. Napolitano to be Secretary of Homeland Security**
- Senate Armed Services Committee, **William Lynn III, to be Deputy Secretary of the Defense Department; Robert Hale to be Undersecretary (Comptroller) and CFO of the Defense Department; Michele Flourney to be Undersecretary for Policy at the Defense Department; and Jeh Charles Johnson to be General Counsel at the Defense Department**
- Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee, **Mary Schapiro to be Chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission; Daniel Tarullo to be a member of the Federal Reserve System Board of Governors; and Christina Romer to be Chair, and Austan Goolsbee and Cecilia Rouse to be members, of the Council of Economic Advisors**