

BUSINESS MEETING ON NOMINATIONS OF RHEA SUH AND JANICE SCHNEIDER
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2014
OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR RON WYDEN
AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

- The committee meets this morning to consider the nominations of Ms. Rhea Suh, to be the Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and Ms. Janice Schneider, to be Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Land and Minerals Management.
- I know there are strong feelings about these nominees on both sides. So I want to spend just a few minutes describing what has been done to be fair to both sides, and why I believe it is fair to vote on these two nominations this morning.
- To start with, after the first hearing for Ms. Suh and Ms. Schneider, I was asked to schedule a second day of hearings. Something no other nominee currently on the Senate calendar has been required to do.
- None of the 155 nominations that were pending at the end of the last session and that have been reported by this or other committees this session has been given a second hearing.
- In the interest of fairness, I agreed to do so, and we held a second hearing on these two nominations last week.
- In addition, the Committee on Environment and Public Works, which shares jurisdiction over Ms. Suh's nomination to be the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Policy, Management and Budget, without a single dissenting vote, just four years ago, and the Senate confirmed her by unanimous consent at that time.
- Ms. Suh has done a good job in her current position. According to information provided by the Department, she has saved the Department of the Interior more than \$500 million in spending cuts and untold millions more through budget and management changes. I have already entered documentation on these savings into the record of last week's hearing.
- In addition, Ms. Suh has been very helpful in working with us on our bipartisan wildfire disaster funding bill, which will put more resources into preventing wildfires in our forests.
- In fairness to colleagues who asked for more time to consider these two nominations, I agreed to postpone a vote on Ms. Suh and Ms. Schneider last month, when the committee reported the 11 other nominations from last year, and to convene a second hearing on these two.
- Members were given a second opportunity to question the nominees in a public hearing, and a second opportunity to submit questions for the record.
- The nominees answered all of the questions for the record last Friday, and members have now had 5 days to review their answers.
- Fairness is a two-way street. While I have tried to be fair to my colleagues in giving them a second hearing and extra time in which to consider these nominees, fairness to the nominees means acting on their nominations.
- I do not believe it is fair to them to delay votes on their nominations any longer.
- Let me wrap up with another important point. I recognize Senator Murkowski's heartfelt, sincere, and longstanding concern for her Alaska constituents in King Cove and the

disagreements my colleague has had with the Department of the Interior on the Izembek land exchange.

- In an effort to be both fair and supportive, I spent many hours working with Senator Murkowski to ensure that the Department, and Secretary Jewell personally, would take additional steps to visit the site and hear from the affected residents of the community before reaching a final decision on the land exchange.
- Finally, on the fairness front, it is important to note that Suh testified under oath that she had nothing to do with the Izembek issue. Absolutely nothing.
- Now with respect to Ms. Schneider, I recognize the frustration of colleagues over the Office of Surface Mining's proposed stream buffer rule and over the controversy surrounding that Office's choice of baselines to use in measuring the rule's impacts.
- Once again, Ms. Schneider had nothing to do with the proposed rule or the selection of the baseline, and she has unequivocally committed to a fair and accurate assessment of cost and benefits before any proposed rule is finalized on her watch. I don't see how any further delay in considering her nomination serves anyone.
- To repeat what I said at their second hearing last week, I strongly support both Ms. Suh and Ms. Schneider.
- I believe they are both highly qualified for the positions to which they have been nominated.
- I urge all of my colleagues to vote to report their nominations to the floor.