

Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Wyden
Business Meeting on Pending Nominations
Tuesday, October 8, 2013

- The Committee will come to order.
- This Committee has a long history of working in a bipartisan fashion. Once again, with the assistance and good counsel of Senator Murkowski, I believe we're going to be able to do that again this morning.
- It's our intention to, since we have a quorum, to vote quickly on the nominations of Mr. Michael L. Connor to be the Deputy Secretary of the Interior and Dr. Elizabeth M. Robinson to be the Under Secretary of Energy.
- And when we have completed our business, I know a number of colleagues want to discuss the effects of the shutdown on the various issues related to our committee.
- My view is both of these nominees are highly qualified for the positions for which they've been nominated.
- Mike Connor's going to bring two decades of experience with this Committee and the Department of the Interior to the position of Deputy Secretary.

- He began his federal career in the Solicitor's Office at the Department, went on to serve as the Director of the Indian Water Rights Office, before joining the staff of the Committee, where he staffed this committee on water issues for 8 years.
- Similarly, Beth Robinson is going to bring a quarter of a century of experience working in both the legislative and executive branches to the office of Under Secretary of Energy.
- She began her career as a congressional fellow, and went on to work as a staff member on the House Science Committee, as a project director at the Office of Technology Assessment, and as deputy director of the Congressional Budget Office.
- She has extensive experience with technology issues and I'm of the view that this will serve her well as Under Secretary of Energy.
- She has extensive experience with federal budget and science-and-technology issues and I'm of the view that this will serve her well as Under Secretary of Energy. She will be responsible for project management and performance across the Department.

- Both of these nominees are already serving colleagues in Senate-confirmed positions. Both were previously confirmed quickly, on voice votes. I hope we can confirm them to their new positions as quickly and without opposition.
- So it's my intention now to recognize Senator Murkowski. Again, I want to thank the Senator for her cooperation and assistance as we look to move very quickly to schedule a hearing on the effects of the shutdown on the various issues relating to the committee's jurisdiction.
- We will have Senator Murkowski make her remarks and after we vote on the nominees, and if colleagues have any other statements they'd like to make on the colleagues, once we complete the vote, we'll have a discussion inside the committee with respect to the shutdown.
- Senator Murkowski.

(Senator Murkowski was recognized. The committee approved the pending nominations.)

- Colleagues, let's just spend a few minutes to discuss the effects of the government shutdown on programs under the Department of the Interior's jurisdiction.

- A number of you have discussed this with me. I spoke about it on the Floor yesterday in the context of a development we saw just last Friday.
- Last Friday, there was an exceptionally good news story that didn't really get all the attention it deserved. But it said that now our country is number one – number one – in terms of energy production in the world.
- It's not Saudi Arabia. It's not Russia. It is the Red, White and Blue. It is an extraordinary success story.
- Of course, a big part of it, Senator Hoeven knows, is due to the natural gas boom in the Dakotas. But also, there's been exceptional growth in the renewables, particularly solar and wind.
- And what I talked about on the Floor yesterday is the government shutdown puts that success story at risk. Because you cannot get new permits, for example, when there's a shutdown. You can't get it in the natural gas area, where we're talking about federal land.
- And I'm certainly a strong supporter of renewable energy offshore and you can't get those permits either.
- All of you have been discussing this matter with Senator Murkowski and I and we are going to work with colleagues to schedule as quickly as possible a hearing on the impact of the government shutdown on programs under the Committee's jurisdiction.

- I just want colleagues to know that we'll work with both sides to get that done as quickly as possible.
- Let me recognize Senator Murkowski.