

Chairman Ron Wyden's Opening Statement for Sally Jewell Nomination Hearing

The Committee meets this morning to consider the nomination of Sally Jewell to be the Secretary of the Interior.

With authorities ranging from managing national parks to offshore oil and gas development to protecting fish and wildlife, serving as Secretary of Interior is almost like an extreme sport for multi-taskers.

We will hear this morning from Sally Jewell, who knows a bit about multi-tasking from having been a petroleum engineer, a corporate CEO, a banker and a conservationist. She'll certainly need to draw on all these experiences and more to tackle the multiple responsibilities of the Secretary of the Interior. Probably the biggest challenge Ms. Jewell faces will be striking the right balance between the Secretary's dual roles of both conserving and developing our resources.

And the trade-offs, as we talked about, are complicated because we want to have it all – we want to have jobs and protect our scenic treasures and obviously that can be easier said than done.

I also intend to discuss the fact that Americans are now spending \$646 billion a year on outdoor recreation and generating nearly \$40 billion in Federal tax revenue, so the economics of public lands have changed in America. Recreation has become a big jobs engine and it will be good for our economy if it grows bigger.

I think we all understand that jobs in America come from the private sector and if through the department we can look to come up with innovative, fresh policies to set the climate for job growth and protecting our treasures, that will certainly be a good for our country.

As the former CEO of a nearly \$2 billion outdoor equipment company, Ms. Jewell's experience makes her especially well-positioned to maximize the jobs created and revenues generated for Federal taxpayers from recreation on public lands and the businesses that are supporting it.

Finally, my home state of Oregon has no shortage of challenging resource issues. Whether it's managing the checkerboard pattern of O&C lands to support local communities, to get the timber cut up while protecting our environmental values, addressing the intractable water conflicts in the Klamath Basin or developing renewable energy in our forests or off the Oregon coast, there's plenty to keep the Secretary of Interior busy for the next four years.

I realize the next Secretary can't spend all her time focused solely on Oregon issues any more than I can as Chairman of the Committee. Certainly there are important national issues that need to be addressed.

These include ensuring taxpayers receive full value for resources produced from federal lands, managing the renewable and natural gas energy boom to ensure it is done in an environmentally responsible fashion, and finding a long-term solution to provide resource-dependent communities across the country a fair share of the revenue from federal lands.

On this last issue, the Committee is going to be holding a hearing on the Secure Rural Schools program fairly shortly. This program, which I authored with our former colleague Larry Craig, has been a lifeline for timber-dependent communities across the country.

The funding expired last year and cash-strapped communities are facing deadlines later this spring to decide about retaining teachers, whether or not to close schools, what to do about law enforcement and roads and so many other basic services. I want to say we look forward to that debate, but a short-term extension is not a long-term solution for these communities. We've got to get our people back to work in the woods, for example, we have got to increase the number of jobs in resource-dependent communities where there's federal lands and federal water. We believe that can be done consistent with protecting our environmental values.

I certainly look forward to working with colleagues of both parties on these kinds of approaches, a broader revenue sharing effort that can provide affected states and communities with a share of the money generated from resource extraction from nearby federal lands and federal waters.

There are a host of challenges that await the next Secretary. I am pleased Ms. Jewell is spending so much time talking to senators, talking to experts in the field, and especially with this being a new position for Ms. Jewell, the fact that she is spending a lot of time talking to elected officials of both political parties, experts in the field is very welcome.