

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES



SENATOR MARIA CANTWELL, *Ranking Member*

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Opening Statement Senator Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) Hearing on Nomination of Susan Beard to be Inspector General of the Department of Energy May 12, 2016

“Thank you, Madam Chairman, for scheduling this hearing. And thank you, Ms. Beard, for your willingness to serve in this capacity as inspector general for the Department of Energy.

“The role of the inspector general, as my colleague has said, is a very important role in any agency. But an inspector general is charged with the task in this particular agency with the prevention and detection of fraud and abuse in its programs and operations; it is key.

“This responsibility is especially great in an agency like the Department of Energy:

- with its \$30 billion budget,
- its responsibility for maintaining and safeguarding our nuclear arsenal,
- for preserving our nuclear secrets,
- for cleaning up some of the most hazarously contaminated places on earth, and
- for conducting cutting-edge research and development at the distant edges of scientific understanding.

“The job calls for someone with both integrity and demonstrated ability, who is familiar with the department’s many programs but can still maintain her independence from the agency.

“The inspector general must be able to identify the department’s failings, recommend corrective actions and ensure progress is being made to correct problems. This is something that I will touch on in my questions.

“This is especially important to me and to the state of Washington, because we have a long history of leaking nuclear waste tanks, missed cleanup deadlines and workers being exposed to toxic vapors at Hanford.

“The former inspector general has well documented many of these in past reports. But I will be looking for assurances that we will be able to hold the department accountable and will ensure that it meets its cleanup responsibilities and protects its workers. As you probably know, we have a tri-party agreement with the state of Washington and DOE on meeting these deadlines.



“I believe Ms. Beard has good credentials. She knows the Department of Energy. She has spent the past 27 years as an attorney in the General Counsel’s Office at the Department of Energy.

“As the department’s designated ethics official, she has been responsible for administering the Ethics in Government Act within the department and guarding against conflicts of interest.

“She has demonstrated good integrity and legal capabilities that the job requires. I will also be looking forward to questioning about what vigilant watchdog role she can play in holding this very important agency accountable.

“Thank you very much for your willingness to serve.”

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