



**Opening Statement**  
**Nomination Hearing for Dr. James F. Reilly II to be Director of the U.S. Geological Survey**  
**Chairman Lisa Murkowski**  
**March 6, 2018**

Good morning and welcome, everyone. The Committee will come to order as we begin our hearing to consider the nomination of Dr. James Reilly to be Director of the U.S. Geological Survey.

This is a critical agency, it is tasked with surveying and inventorying our nation's mineral base. It provides real-time data for volcanic eruptions, landslides, earthquakes, and more. It deploys thousands of stream gauges throughout the United States to monitor groundwater and river levels. This critical, objective data helps decision makers understand how geologic processes impact human life, national security, and vital infrastructure.

So, I have to tell you Dr. Reilly, when I first heard nomination, I thought it was a little bit strange that we were going to be speaking with an astronaut – an astronaut nominated to run the agency that really focuses on rocks, geology, stuff deep in the Earth. But clearly your background in geosciences and geology, certainly as well as your service to our nation, make you qualified to run the Department of the Interior's premier science bureau.

Dr. Reilly began his career researching stable isotope geochronology in Antarctica. He then spent 15 years as a geologist in Texas, conducting surveys of oil and gas deposits in the Gulf of Mexico.

While working as a geologist in Texas, he spent 22 days on the ocean floor in deep submergence vehicles, testing imaging technology used in deep water engineering projects.

He then goes from below the surface of the ocean to space. Dr. Reilly has completed three missions to space to help repair the International Space Station, conducting five space walks and spending a total of 856 hours in space – so plenty of time to be thinking about how you're going to manage this agency here.

Dr. Reilly truly has an impressive resume, and it is good to finally have a geologist nominated to run the USGS—someone who can help the Survey re-prioritize its core mandate, which is to be a geological survey. This will not only help restore America's mineral security, but also our economic and national security.

Dr. Reilly, I welcome you to the committee and thank you for your willingness to again serve our nation. I hope to move your nomination quickly, reporting you from the committee as soon as possible.

I also hope to confirm you, along with two other well-qualified Interior nominees – Susan Combs and Ryan Nelson – as soon as possible. I would note that Ms. Combs and Mr. Nelson have now been stuck on Senate calendar for more than five months; we don't want to put you in that position here, that's far longer than their predecessors in the previous administration. So we certainly want to figure out a good way to move those individuals through.

I will now turn to Senator Cantwell for her opening remarks.

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