

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
April 30, 2025 Hearing: *The Travnicek, Beyer, Garrish, and Abbey Nominations*
Questions for the Record Submitted to Ms. Leslie Beyer

Questions for the Record from Ranking Member Martin Heinrich

Question 1: Recently, the president has taken actions to prioritize oil, gas, and mining on public land – even going as far to sign an executive order to overturn the multiple-use, sustained-yield principle of land management to favor mining.

As the assistant secretary overseeing the Bureau of Land Management, how will you ensure our public lands are managed for all uses and will you oppose efforts to make any one use a higher priority than others?

Response: I support the President’s and Secretary’s objectives to increase energy production on federal lands in line with FLPMA’s multiple-use mandate, which I commit to upholding, if confirmed.

Question 2: The Government Accountability Office plays a vital role in making sure agencies are implementing the law as passed by Congress and ensuring American’s taxpayer dollars are being used the way Congress said they should.

In order for GAO to do its job, it needs cooperation from agencies in responding to their oversight work in a timely manner.

If confirmed, will you commit to be responsive to GAO’s outreach and requests for information without delay?

Response: I believe improving government performance and accountability are important objectives. I commit to being responsive to requests from the GAO, if confirmed.

Question 3: In your written testimony, you state that “we have seen extraordinary feats of innovation in energy development that took our country from being a net energy importer to the world’s largest energy exporter, all while leading the world in reducing emissions.”

Do you believe that a country that is the world’s largest exporter and has record production on public lands is in an emergency, and therefore needs to suspend the requirements under National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act and National Historic Preservation when permitting energy and mining projects?

Response: I agree with the President and believe we are in a national energy emergency driven by a significant increase in energy demand. If confirmed, I will support the President’s and Secretary’s agenda to remove or reduce regulatory red tape to accelerate development of reliable domestic energy resources and critical minerals in accordance with the law to strengthen the nation’s energy grid.

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Questions for the Record from Senator Maria Cantwell

Question 1: Minidoka National Historical Site

During World War II, Japanese Americans throughout the State of Washington were forcibly removed from their homes and unjustly detained. I worked with my colleagues from Idaho to establish the Minidoka National Historic Site which includes the former Minidoka camp in Idaho and the Bainbridge Island Japanese Exclusion Memorial in the state of Washington. These sites, and the organizations that support them, honor the strength and sacrifice of internment survivors and help Americans heal and reflect on this terrible chapter in our country's history.

- If confirmed, will you commit to engaging with the Japanese American community and others on the proposed Lava Ridge Wind project?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to ensure the President's directive regarding the Lava Ridge Wind Project in Idaho is implemented in an efficient and durable manner.

Question 2: Protecting Public Lands in Alaska

I have worked to maintain unique and irreplaceable federal lands in Alaska like the Tongass, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and Bristol Bay, home to the world's largest sockeye salmon run. There have always been development pressures, but what we proved is the relatively small short-term economic returns are not worth hurting places that are like nowhere else in the world, and in the case of Bristol Bay, support a multitude of good fishing jobs.

I bring this up because I know you will be pressed on issues impacting Alaska. I hope you will consider in each case whether short-term and limited economic gains from a resource extraction project outweighs the long-term impacts to developing these areas.

For example, the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act mandated two lease sales in the Arctic Refuge. The Congressional Budget Office projected the oil and gas leasing program would yield \$2.2 billion. However, both lease sales produced little to no bidding interest and thus revenue. In the first lease sale held during the first Trump Administration, no major oil companies showed up to bid. And the sale generated a mere \$12 million — less than 1% of the total revenue that was projected. The second lease sale held last week was also a complete dud; not a single company bid — big or small. It appears that the private sector realizes that the economics don't support drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

- Given the last two auctions, do you think new lease sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would result in meaningful private sector interest or substantial revenues?
- If so, why do you believe an additional lease sale would be different than the past two sales?
- Are you aware of the different positions within the Alaska Native community regarding oil and gas development on the Arctic Refuge?
- How can the Department force private sector interest in a lease sale if none exists?
- Will you commit to meeting with all Tribal stakeholders before taking any actions in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

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Response: Alaska is a majestic state, boasting a wealth of natural resources. Industry has proven the production of hydrocarbons can be done responsibly in Alaska. The President has also signed an executive order on unleashing Alaska's resource potential. However, the current regulatory regime has prohibited efficient production and transmission projects to the detriment of local communities and tribes. If confirmed, I commit to engaging with Alaska stakeholders including tribes, state and local officials, and the Alaska Congressional delegation to ensure Interior's Alaska policies align with Alaska's distinct legal framework.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is home to one of the most threatened populations of polar bears in the world: the Southern Beaufort Sea population. The Department of the Interior announced that it plans to open up the entire Coastal Plain for oil and gas exploration. Polar bear experts, including those within the department, have said that oil and gas leasing, exploration, and development on the Coastal Plain would irreversibly and significantly harm the Coastal Plain's polar bear population. The impacts from seismic exploration alone can cause death and serious injury to denning bears and cubs.

- Are you aware that experts say there is a potential that polar bear deaths caused by oil and gas development on the Coastal Plain could have population-level impacts to the Southern Beaufort Sea population?
- If confirmed, how will you ensure that the Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the Arctic Refuge and threatened polar bears, can fulfill their mission to "to conserve, protect, and enhance... wildlife ... and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people" within the context of the Department's drive to open up all critical polar bear denning habitat to oil and gas development?

Response: I understand and greatly respect the uniqueness of Alaska. As I mentioned during the hearing, I have spent a significant amount of time in the state and created very fond memories there. If confirmed, I commit to engaging with Alaska stakeholders including tribes, state and local officials, and the Alaska Congressional delegation to ensure Interior's Alaska policies align with Alaska's distinct legal framework.

The statutory purposes of the Arctic Refuge are to conserve animals and plants in their natural diversity, ensure a place for subsistence hunting and gathering activities, protect water quality and quantity, and fulfill international wildlife treaty obligations.

- Will you commit to considering all of these purposes - as required by statute - when making any decisions regarding the refuge?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to following the law.

Question 3: National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska

The Western Arctic region in Alaska is also a vast one-of-a-kind place with immense oil and gas development pressure. The Western Arctic is a critical carbon sink, premiere tourist destination, contains unparalleled wildlife habitat, and has been home to Indigenous traditions for countless generations. The Department of the Interior recently released a report and guidance that conclude that there cannot be development in the Western Arctic without harm to caribou and other key

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species, and it names subsistence as a “significant resource value” for the reserve that any development would jeopardize.

- Do you support Tribal subsistence uses of the Western Arctic, including the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A)?
- Are you aware of the different positions within the Alaska Native community regarding oil and gas development on the NPR-A?
- Do you commit to ensuring that Tribal subsistence uses of NPR-A, including caribou are not jeopardized?

Response: I agree with Secretary Burgum that energy production is and will continue to be compatible with Alaska Native subsistence uses. If confirmed, I commit to engaging with Alaska stakeholders including tribes, state and local officials, and the Alaska Congressional delegation to ensure Interior’s Alaska policies align with Alaska’s distinct legal framework.

Question 4: Unused Oil & Gas Leases

According to the latest Interior Department data there are over 10 million acres of existing onshore oil and gas leases that have been stockpiled, but are not producing, and there are almost 7,000 approved and available but unused permits to drill on those federal onshore leases.

- Why do you think these leases are not being used to apply for permits to drill, even after extended periods of time?
- Why do you think these APD permits are not being actually used to drill for more oil and gas?
- Do you think the relatively cheap cost of federal leases and rental rates as compared to many states’ regimes may allow companies to stockpile leases without much downside?
- The size of these unused lands are about the same as Rhode Island, Delaware, Connecticut, and Hawaii combined, do you think it’s reasonable for these public lands to be off limits and unused for years at a time?
- How can you help ensure that the surface estate can be made available for other multiple uses, like hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation?
- Do you believe the Department of Interior should take a hard look this vast amount of public land being locked-up in unused federal oil and gas leases and consider supporting policies that would relinquish those unused leases if they are impeding other public uses of our federal lands and waters such as hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation?

Response: I agree with President Trump that developing America’s abundant energy and natural resources will provide affordable and reliable energy to the American people and enhance our national security. If confirmed, I will implement the President’s agenda to meet our growing energy needs in a manner that leverages our resources responsibly in accordance with the law.

Question 5: Offshore Energy

I am concerned that the Administration’s pursuit of oil and gas development could hurt the outdoor recreation industry. Protecting our shorelines is vitally important to a coastal state like mine. An oil spill off our beloved coastline could not only cause terrible environmental damage,

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but it would also threaten Washington's maritime industry that supports over 174,000 jobs and more than \$45 billion in annual revenue.

- Do you support offshore oil and gas drilling in federal waters off the coast of Washington state or the Western United States?

Response: I understand that the Department has announced the first step in the development of a new schedule for offshore oil and gas lease sales on the Outer Continental Shelf. If I am confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on this process and commit to ensuring the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management engages in a public engagement process, including opportunities for public review and comment, as required by law. I look forward to working with you in this process and learning more about the resources and needs of your state.

Question 6: OPEC

I believe we need to face the reality and be honest that there's no way we can drill our way to full petroleum energy independence or dominance. Not as long as the OPEC+ cartel can manipulate world supply and hold great sway over our pump prices. Even though we are the world's largest oil producer, we do not control the vast reserves that other OPEC+ nations do, nor the globally-set price of crude. But we do now at least have alternative fuels. The driver filling up their car with electricity pays just a fraction of what they would pay at a gas station. An Energy Department study found that Washington state EV drivers would save around \$11,000 in fuel costs. Only by finally ending our dependence on fossil fuel can we permanently secure America's national security, maintain affordable energy prices, and tackle the climate crisis.

- Do you agree that OPEC+ has proven and technically recoverable reserves that greatly outnumber U.S.-controlled reserves?
- Do you agree that the price of crude oil is set on international markets like ICE that respond to the global supply and production of crude oil?
- Do you agree that the above two factors ultimately limits the ability of the U.S. to influence prices when OPEC+ can ramp up and down production as the dominant market supplier?
- Do you agree that the interests of OPEC+ countries like Russia and Iran do not align with our national interest?
- What level of increase in U.S. oil production do you think would meaningfully impact the price of oil and reduce U.S. petroleum prices? Do you believe this will this reduction result in meeting President Trump's campaign promise to reduce gasoline pump prices to \$2 per gallon?
- Do you support the trend of domestic oil producers to hold back on additional development and not overextend their assets and balance sheets in order to keep the price of oil at a stable and elevated price?
- In that context, do you think a meaningful increase in domestic production will occur in the next couple of years?
- If confirmed, how will you help the Interior Department bring affordable fossil fuel alternatives to market?

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Response: I believe that energy is produced most efficiently and with the least emissions in the United States, contributing significantly to our economy and the reduction of global emissions. I agree with Secretary Burgum that producing less oil and gas in the U.S. does not reduce global energy demand, it simply pushes production to other parts of the world. Achieving American energy independence and dominance will rely on secure, reliable, and affordable forms of energy from domestic resources. While all forms of energy may contribute, there is a premium on baseload, dispatchable sources. If confirmed, I will work with you and this Committee to ensure our energy grid is safe, reliable and secure.

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Questions for the Record from Senator Mazie Hirono

Question 1: There is significant interest from mining companies to develop claims inside national parks as well as on land near and adjacent to national parks. Mining activity could have significant impacts on the natural resources that these parks were established to protect.

If confirmed, will you ensure that the National Park Service is consulted on any mining activity, either inside or outside of national park boundaries, that impacts park natural resources?

Follow-up: If the results of a consultation showed negative impacts on National Park resources, would you condition or deny the mining approval?

Response: I have visited and appreciate the resources of many of America's national parks. As I am not at the Department, I am not familiar with issues or legal requirements related to mining within national parks, but if I am confirmed, I will learn more about these issues and comply with the law.

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Questions for the Record from Senator Catherine Cortez Masto

Question 1: If confirmed, will you commit to working with the next BLM Director and BLM's State Office in Nevada to create a statewide RMP?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about your perspective on a statewide resource management plan and commit to working closely with the BLM and stakeholders in Nevada and across the states to understand their views. I will work to ensure resource management plans achieve appropriate balance to advance American prosperity and national security in accordance with the law.

Question 2: Would you agree that some lands should be prioritized for other uses, such as hunting, fishing, or habitat preservation, over other uses like oil and gas leasing?

For what reasons would officials that oversee the country's oil and gas leasing program want to have lands like the Ruby Mountains, which are cherished as one of Nevada's great natural wonders, made available for oil and gas leasing?

Would you agree that speculative lease holders are a drain on agency resources and this is a wasteful management of land that could be managed for other purposes?

Will you commit to helping me protect the Ruby Mountains from oil and gas leasing?

Response: As I stated in my hearing, I do not believe all parcels of federal land have equal value, and I commit to upholding the multiple-use mandate on public lands in accordance with law, which provides for public input, if I am confirmed. I understand the importance of the Ruby Mountains and I commit to working with you on ways to balance multiple-use activities on public lands managed by the Department of the Interior.

Question 3: Do you support selling off our public lands to pay down the debt or other cost-cutting efforts?

Will you support community-driven legislation – like my Southern Nevada lands bill – that facilitates a very specific disposal of land identified by local officials for housing and economic development needs?

Can communities in Nevada count on you to be a partner in the decision-making process when it comes to the disposal of public lands so as not to harm our rural communities and existing access to our public lands? And can you ensure that the Nevada Delegation and other Nevada stakeholders have a seat at the table?

Response: As I stated in my hearing, I do not believe all parcels of federal land have equal value. Certain public lands, like Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, have recreation and conservation values while other parcels in urban areas like Las Vegas may

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not have the same values and may be suitable for disposal to help address housing needs. I support Secretary Burgum's effort with the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to make underutilized federal land available to increase affordable housing supply and if confirmed, I commit to working with you and local communities to achieve this goal.

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Questions for the Record from Senator John W. Hickenlooper

Question 1: China has significant control over rare earth element supply chains – which are crucial for energy and military applications. Earlier this month, China imposed export controls on seven rare earth elements. The Biden Administration took critical steps via Department of Defense investments, manufacturing tax credits, and Department of Energy programs to build a domestic supply chain for rare earth elements.

What are the key steps, including but not limited to permitting reforms, that you will support within the Department of Interior to contribute to securing a reliable supply chain for rare earth elements?

Given financing challenges like price volatility and the lack of long-term buyers, what role should federal investment tools—like loans, tax credits, offtake agreements, or contracts for differences—play in supporting new U.S. rare earth projects?

Response: I agree with the President’s actions to make the United States the leading producer and processor of non-fuel minerals, including rare earth minerals. If confirmed, I look forward to working to ensure the Department prioritizes mineral production activities and streamlines permitting to enhance national security.

Question 2: The BLM has made great strides in implementing its multi-use mandate by enabling renewable energy development. The BLM has now permitted 36 gigawatts of renewable energy infrastructure on the land it manages.

Will you prioritize renewable energy on public lands and provide the staffing and resources required to support the successful development of these projects?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to working to increase our domestic supply of secure, reliable, and affordable energy in accordance with the law and the President’s and Secretary’s directives.