

**Opening Statement**  
**Committee Business Meeting on Nominations (Croley, Smith, Kia'aina)**  
**Committee Nominations Hearing (Orr, Elkind, Suh, Beaudreau)**  
**December 12, 2013**  
**Senator Lisa Murkowski**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We take up important work this morning. Since this Committee last convened, of course, we have seen changes in the Senate's rules with respect to nominations. Without seeking to revisit that controversy here this morning, I hope all Senators would agree that our committee's process on nominations -- always important -- now has renewed significance.

It is worthy of note that through history, more than 90% of nominees are confirmed. And roll call votes, when taken, are ordinarily not close; nominees often are confirmed with large majorities. Some have contended that this process has been merely a "rubber stamp" for the President. On the other hand, others explain that the high "pass rate" is an indicator that the process generally works properly. Either way, the work of Committees generally and of this Committee specifically is crucial in the confirmation process. Among other things, through the committee process, the President and certainly nominees themselves should expect a thorough vetting process.

Thus, it is good to be in that vetting process this morning. As I observed at the hearing for the nominees whose nominations I hope we will report this morning, it is heartening to recommend the Senate's advice and consent to the nominations of qualified individuals with critical -- if not the most high profile -- work to do.

I would also like to welcome each of our distinguished nominees to the Committee and thank them for their willingness to serve.

I must first recognize a fellow Alaskan, Tommy Beaudreau. Some of you may not know that Mr. Beaudreau grew up in Alaska, graduating from Service High School in Anchorage. His family moved to the state when his dad got a job working on the North Slope – a story shared by many Alaskans. I'm always pleased to see Alaskans holding positions with decision-making authority over activities in the state – because no one understands the importance of the blend of resource development and protection of our lands and waters like someone who has lived there and experienced the state firsthand.

Mr. Beaudreau, I do thank you for meeting with me yesterday. As I mentioned, I'm counting on you to complete important work even as you conclude service in your current position, and I am looking forward to continuing to work with you in your new role. I have been assured that your new position represents a promotion for you and is evidence of the value that the Secretary and the Administration assign to your counsel. With your experience on Arctic issues, and other issues important to Alaska, I'm optimistic that wise counsel will be heard at the top echelons of the Department of the Interior.

Ms. Suh, it was also good to spend some time with you before the recess. As I mentioned, the Department's role as Alaska's landlord is always front-and-center for me. I am looking forward to learning more from you -- today and through your answers to questions for the record – about your knowledge, experience and policy views on issues that will impact Alaska and the nation.

Dr. Orr and Mr. Elkind, welcome. I have been impressed with the team Secretary Moniz is assembling at the Department of Energy. As I told Dr. Croley and Mr. Smith last month, I am counting on DOE, specifically through its leaders, to be a vigorous advocate for affordable and reliable energy, especially in the interagency process. I also want the Department to carry out its clear legal responsibilities according to settled law.

I will be listening carefully this morning and I will pay close attention to your answers to questions for the record as you outline your qualifications and priorities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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