



**Opening Statement
Nomination of David Bernhardt
Senator Lisa Murkowski
May 18, 2017**

Good morning, everyone. The Committee will come to order.

We are here this morning to consider the nomination of David Bernhardt to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior.

The Deputy Secretary is the Department’s “chief operating officer.” The individual who holds this position is responsible for executing strategy and overseeing the initiatives undertaken by its thousands of employees, as they carry out their statutory duties and the administration’s agenda.

I believe Mr. Bernhardt is an excellent choice for Deputy Secretary. He is a fellow westerner, hailing from the small town of Rifle, Colorado. He understands how the management of federal lands affects those who live near them, the implications of federal policies, and the need for balance between conservation and development. He is an avid sportsman—he understands the balance.

Mr. Bernhardt is already well-known to many of us. He has extensive experience at the Department of the Interior, including several years as its Solicitor, a position, again as noted by Sen. Gardner, for which he was favorably reported from our committee and confirmed by the full Senate by voice vote. Throughout his time at Interior, Mr. Bernhardt gained significant expertise about a range of Alaska and western issues. After meeting with him last week, I am confident he understands how important Alaska is to the Department, and how consequential the Department’s decisions to my state.

I think we will let Mr. Burnhardt speak further to his biography, give him an opportunity to introduce his family, and I too welcome the family—thank you for your willingness to serve in this manner because we all recognize that it’s not just those hold the office but their families that sometimes bear the weight of the office because they don’t see their family.

So recognizing hear from that, I will just further add that Mr. Bernhardt is knowledgeable about the issues facing the Department and the predominantly western lands it manages. He has a strong reputation as a manager, which is critical for a Deputy Secretary. And his nomination is being supported by dozens of groups, including sportsmen’s groups such as Ducks Unlimited, the Safari Club, and the Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.

For members who have questions for Mr. Bernhardt, this is the time, this is the place to ask them. I know that many of us have had an opportunity to visit prior to this hearing. I intend to be here this morning for as long as it takes for members to ask their questions. They will also have the normal opportunity to submit questions for the record and those questions will be due at the close of business today.

Again Mr. Bernhardt I want to thank you for your willingness to return to federal service. I think we all understand how difficult and contentious this process is, right now, but know that it's my intention to move your confirmation as expeditiously as possible.

With that I turn to Senator Cantwell for her opening comments.

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