

Opening Statement
Senator Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.)
Markup on DOE, DOI Secretary Nominees Rick Perry and Ryan Zinke
January 31, 2017

Sen. Cantwell on Committee Business

"Thank you, Madam Chairman. The committee has two housekeeping matters on the agenda this morning that I just wanted to make sure members knew.

"The committee must approve its biannual funding resolution that authorizes the committee to make expenditures out of the Senate's contingency fund. And although the Senate rules require the committee to report the resolution, the text of the resolution dollar amounts are authorized and given to us by the Rules Committee. So, the resolution before us is consistent with the Rules Committee guidance, and I urge adoption.

"The second housekeeping matter is approval of subcommittee assignments and minor changes in the jurisdiction of the national parks subcommittee relating to national monuments. Members have been assigned committees to reflect their preferences in order of seniority as required by our rules. And I understand the Democratic members were able to receive, in most cases, their top priorities.

"The jurisdiction change simply gives the committee more flexibility to consider bills related to national monuments at the full committee level or refer them to the national parks and lands subcommittee depending on the specific matter.

"Finally, I note the committee is not being asked to approve any rule changes to the committee rules, and we can continue to talk to our colleagues about that in the future.

"Thank you, Madam Chair."

--



Sen. Cantwell on Rick Perry

"Madam Chairman, thank you so much. Many of our colleagues have several hearings happening almost simultaneously—so I appreciate you even forgoing your opening statement on these nominees. But it is important that we speak about what is going on with the Trump administration, as it comes to energy and environmental policy.

"The Secretary of Energy is a very important post for the state of Washington. We have nuclear waste clean-up, a very efficient electricity grid that is trying to modernize and an important energy efficiency sector.

"The energy sector is also very important from an economic perspective. Energy is the lifeblood of the economy, and we must keep our investments and our focus on job creation. I'm very concerned that this administration has started off by considering whether to eliminate the DOE Electricity Office and the energy efficiency programs that have been well supported under the last two administrations.

"Our nation's energy sector is undergoing a dramatic transformation away from fossil fuels. These changes give consumers more choices, lower energy bills and they create an opportunity for a more robust job creation environment.

"There are now 2.2 million Americans that work in the energy efficiency industry. Energy efficiency accounted for 14 percent of all new jobs that were created in this country last year. The solar power industry now employs more people than the oil and gas extraction or coal mining industries. In fact, solar jobs have more than doubled in the last five years. The Department of Energy's Quadrennial Energy Review estimates that we are going to need to fill 1.5 million new energy jobs, many of which will be needed in the area of emerging technologies that will define our clean energy economy.

"It is very important as we look at this, especially in the state of Washington, which has 58,000 employees in the clean energy sector. In fact, clean energy employment grew twice as fast in Washington during the last few years than all other job growth in the state.

"We have made too much progress—and even more progress needs to continue to be made—to reverse course now. That is what I fear could happen at the Department of Energy when there is not strong advocacy of these key programs. Our national labs—and our national laboratory in Washington state which can represent an annual investment in innovation of nearly $1 billion—make sure that we make advancements in a clean energy economy and the grid, and also make sure that we are secure. Cybersecurity is a key aspect of this investment.



“Governor Perry’s testimony before this committee has left—in my mind—a great deal of doubt to his commitment. Sens. Stabenow, Hirono, King, Wyden and I all asked questions to get a precise answer in response to whether Governor Perry will protect the Office of Electricity and the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE).

“Media reports have suggested the White House plans to cut these very important science and technology programs at the Department of Energy.

“After reviewing the transcripts and questions for the record, the governor’s responses left me wondering whether he would stand up and fight the White House’s approach to these programs.

“Now a lot can be said in the last few days, as to what the White House’s approach is. Frankly, I’m not sure how much the cabinet secretaries’ input matters, because if you can have somebody at the Department of Defense who’s not even consulted on a security memorandum, where is that going to leave Secretary Perry on issues of nuclear security?

“Let me take a moment to review a little bit of history of where the Trump administration seems to be headed on energy and science policy.

“After the president was elected, Thomas Pyle—a Koch Brothers protégé who led the Energy Department’s Transition Team—drafted a memo outlining 14 energy and environmental initiatives that the Trump administration would be pursuing. Mr. Pyle pointed out that the Trump administration was going to eliminate, rescind and relax several Obama administration initiatives to use energy more efficiently, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and require agencies to take the costs associated with climate change into account.

“Shortly thereafter, the Trump transition team sent an unprecedented questionnaire to the Energy Department, targeting scientists and other civil servants who worked on climate change issues during the Obama administration, asking them to be identified.

“Within minutes of the president’s swearing-in, a day after Governor Perry’s confirmation hearing, the White House website announced that President Trump is going to eliminate the Climate Action Plan, a program that has focused on climate science, energy efficiency, and building efficiency standards. The Climate Action Plan also includes an initiative called the U.S. Global Change Research Program. That was started by President H. W. Bush in 1989 and continued by George W. Bush. These important programs on climate and climate science are now on the chopping block.



“The department is responsible for much of the science that goes into assessing the speed and intensity with which climate change is occurring and what we should do to improve our reliance on energy efficiency and clean energy.

“I do not understand why President Trump appears to be so hostile to these programs. The Energy Department’s energy efficiency programs and standards are expected to save American consumers and businesses $2 trillion on their utility bills by 2030, while reducing carbon pollution by at least 3 million metric tons. This is not a partisan issue. I worked with the last Bush administration on getting the U.S. and China, the two biggest emitters of pollution, to work together on clean energy solutions.

“The Energy Department is working with our national labs and the private sector to develop breakthrough electric grid technologies that will allow consumers and businesses to use energy more efficiently and take advantage of increasingly cost-effective renewable energy. This is the essence of work being done at the national labs.

“I want to mention, too, President Trump’s recent executive order regarding the structure of the National Security Council (NSC). While it is within the discretion of the president to structure his National Security Council as he sees fit, the Secretary of Energy is a member of the NSC, by virtue of statute. This committee championed that provision as part of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007. I would say with everything that’s happening on cyber and the threats that this nation is facing to our electricity grid, now is not the time to remove the secretary from that post.

“President Trump’s executive order would remove the Secretary of Energy from the Principals Committee—what the Obama administration called “the senior interagency forum for consideration of policy issues affecting national security.”

“Given the key technical role the Department of Energy plays when it comes to our nuclear security—and the implementation of the Iran Agreement—I simply cannot understand why replacing scientific and technical expertise with political strategy is a decision in any way designed to make America safer. I don’t understand the strategy of trying to keep that scientific input out of the administration.

“I want to say, I gave Governor Perry multiple opportunities to clarify for the record his enthusiasm for pushing back against some of the more egregious actions the Trump administration is contemplating, especially as it relates to the Office of Electricity and EERE. This is important since President Trump had said, prior to being sworn in, that his cabinet officials could speak for themselves, that they would be free to say whatever they want. So I

see no reason why he could not have spoken in more urgent terms for something that has been supported by both Democratic and Republican administrations and supported enthusiastically.

“For example, the governor said he wanted to work on cybersecurity, but this is at odds with the administration that may be eliminating the very Office of Electricity, in which the research and development on cyber occurs. So we needed stronger statements. We needed more commitment to something that is our future economy.

“I know that Governor Perry repeatedly referred us to his record, which I took to heart. Instead of resolving my questions, it brought more concern. During his time as Texas governor, wind energy flourished, and Governor Perry has spoken eloquently about energy diversification, but he also chose to spend much of his time in office trying to add 11 new coal plants and suing EPA at every chance he could.

“President George W. Bush chose in many of his State of the Union addresses to be an advocate for energy efficiency, for electric vehicles and for moving forward on a clean energy economy. I appreciate that so much more now.

“I hope that—as we move forward—many of my colleagues will work very hard to speak out against the policies of this administration that are coming into conflict with science.

“Trump’s executive order on immigration may not have an impact on the Department of Energy yet, but many of our national laboratories are supported in key scientific missions by post-doctoral fellowships and scientists that come to us from all over the world.

“In fact, it is the case that refugee scientists were key to our Manhattan Project successes. Have we forgotten that Albert Einstein was an immigrant who fled Europe? Or that Enrico Fermi’s wife was Jewish, and he and his family came to the United States after the Nobel Prize ceremony in 1938? So we need to make sure the Trump administration is going to respect the science and the global nature of clean energy solutions that are going to help us meet some of our greatest challenges, and also—and most importantly—help us grow jobs here in the United States of America.

“So I thank you, Madam Chair, for allowing me to make this statement, and I hope that our colleagues will be given the opportunity to make statements here or that they can enter into the record.

“Thank you.”



--

Sen. Cantwell on Ryan Zinke

“Thank you, Madam Chair. And if I could, say a few words about the Zinke nomination. And thank you for your comments.

“You’re right, the Energy Committee often times feels like a committee that is more about the regional perspective of energy policy than about the politics of our sides of the aisle.

“Even though you and I come from the same part, and our colleague from Montana comes from the same part of the world, you can also still have differences of opinion about energy, and certainly environmental, policy.

“I congratulate Congressman Zinke for getting the vote out of the committee today. But, I do want to say that it’s good that he is here because I get one more chance to remind him about how important these policies are.

“The coal policies of our nation are critically important to the people of Washington state. They feel under siege by the amount of transport and related issues facing our state. They want a Secretary of the Interior who is going to be a fair and judicious arbiter of those issues.

“The coal policies that have started under Secretary Jewell—to review the cost of coal extraction, get a fair deal for the taxpayer and make sure that the environment is treated correctly—are some things that I think we’ll continue to have many, many dialogues about.

“I am concerned that the Trump administration has made it clear that it wants to pursue an aggressive energy development agenda—undoing reasonable protections—on environmentally sensitive lands and waters. And they want to renew efforts at reversing protections both onshore and offshore. So, I hope that this conversation about how we provide good stewardship will continue.

“I know you want to be a Teddy Roosevelt-type of Secretary of the Interior, but right now you’re working with an administration who—in their own infrastructure bill—says that they’re going to pay for it through oil and gas [development] on federal lands, all of our federal lands. I don’t know where that stops. And I think that the issue that we find challenging here—and that all nominees are going to be challenged on—is how we continue to make sure that the public’s interests are kept at hand.



“While I’m not supporting your nomination today, I hope that, as we move forward, we see a different response from this White House on how important the resource management of our nation and existing environmental laws are to our country.

“Thank you.”

###