

**U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell**

**Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources**

**Hearing to Consider the Nomination of David M. Turk to be the Deputy Secretary of Energy**

**March 4, 2021**

CANTWELL: Mr. Chairman, I have a question for counsel.

MANCHIN: Please, counsel.

CANTWELL: How long has this committee been in effect in the United States of America as it relates to public lands?

FOWLER: This committee has been in existence since 1977, but our predecessor committee traces its roots back to 1816, when it was one of the first 11 committees that the Senate appointed.

CANTWELL: And what was the committee called then?

FOWLER: Committee on Public Lands.

CANTWELL: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, my point is this: we had a nominee come before this committee who basically was expressing the views of the President of the United States. Now as a member of this body, I have voted many times for Republican judge nominees who basically said outlandish things when they were professors, or basically, maybe even in the private sector in some other capacity. So I don't begrudge any of my colleagues for disagreeing with the policies of the President of the United States. But I was in the room and I heard her answer these questions. And I really felt aggrieved that people kept pushing her on her answers when she was clear what the president supported.

Now, if people don't want to vote for her because they don't believe in the president's views, I respect that. I really do. But I hope that we will realize that she also said she thinks that fossil fuels are going to be around for a while. And I personally believe, for a committee that's been around since 1816, we really do have to ask our questions about what is the use of public lands? Are taxpayers getting a fair deal? What are the impacts of climate on us as a nation? And for somebody whose forest lands are burning up and are trying to come up with new policies, or as simple as saying we need to do something about methane waste flaring, I just hope that our colleagues will look at these policies after today and move forward on trying to work together.

We know that this is a transitioning period for the United States of America. This committee has had many hearings on what that transition looks like, the challenges we face, and I hope we work together. But I'm so proud that we've been around since 1816, not proud that it's taken this long to get someone from Indian Country to be nominated and be served in the president's cabinet. This is a historic day, and I urge my colleagues to vote yes.

CANTWELL: Thank you Senator Lee. Mr. Turk, congratulations on your nomination. I wanted to go over, you know, a few very important issues for us at the State of Washington, particularly at Hanford. There's been some changes in how the defense contracts work, particularly with subcontractors. And so one of the goals I think we have is to have a more efficient and effective regime. So in the long term I think it'll probably be a positive thing, but in the short term, we are seeing some loss of small businesses because of this.

So, will you commit to work with us on these issues to make sure that during this time of pandemic, we're not losing a core infrastructure—the whole reason why this is important is, nobody wants this to be all about big prime contractors. People want other small businesses in the Tri-Cities to get part of the defense contracts. So if the change we're making is about more efficiency, but in the end we get rid of this layer of small business and they're not there to do the subcontracting work, it's not going to be a positive result. So will you work with us to ensure a smoother implementation and to help those small businesses—the small business infrastructure of the Tri-Cities?

TURK: Well absolutely Senator Cantwell, and thank you for your years of focus on what is the largest cleanup site and incredibly complicated in the DOE's jurisdiction. I know it's a priority for you, it will be a priority for me if I'm confirmed as Deputy Secretary.

CANTWELL: Right. And I'm going to ask you a couple more questions, sorry.

TURK: No worries.

CANTWELL: Are you committed to proposing funding for Hanford that allies with the Tri-Party agreement milestones, and do you commit to meeting all the Tri-Party agreement milestones?

TURK: I know there's been a lot of frustration with the previous administration to lowball their funding requests here in a way that's not helpful for the process. And I certainly look forward to working with Secretary Granholm to make sure that we have the kind of funding, the kind of budgeting to be helpful. And just on your particular circumstances in Hanford, I wanted to get to that. I absolutely look forward to working with you on that.

CANTWELL: And then on HAMMER, which is a workforce continuum of opportunity to train and skill the workers on the safety and security they need to do this job, do you support the Hanford HAMMER center?

TURK: Well we need to have our workers safe, we need to have the skills, we need to have the small businesses taken care of, just as you mentioned. So, yes.

CANTWELL: Okay, so on—thank you for mentioning the 2020 bill, and I thank my colleague for helping to get the grid modernization as part of that. One of the reasons I think nobody here on the committee would be surprised to know that we've had vulnerabilities to our grid, we've all been trying to focus on it. But certainly the big storm that hit the United States, Uri, that had impacts not just in Texas but in the Upper Midwest, caused a lot of problems. The storm caused rolling blackouts, everyone is hearing the storms about Texas, but Midwest, Midcontinent Independence System Operator had problems and so did the Southwest Power Pool region. So these are issues that people are starting to say, I think the damage from Uri is something like \$100 billion. One of the things we need to discuss is more resiliency and more effectiveness of our grid. There are people that think that we can invest more in transmission

and interconnectivity to help decarbonize but also, reliability and address the risks of cybersecurity that my colleague from Oregon was also bringing up. So, do you agree with reports that upgrading the transmission capacity, adding new capacity, helps us by both decarbonizing and actually helping lower electricity costs?

TURK: Absolutely, the investments we need to make in the grid, and thank you for your leadership on this issue for many, many years, are absolutely critical to achieve our climate change objectives, to achieve our resiliency of our grids, and to make sure that the power stays on even in times of challenge. We need to do better.

CANTWELL: What would you do as Deputy to help elevate this issue?

TURK: So we've got phenomenal talents at the Department of Energy, not only at headquarters but throughout the national labs, whether it's PNNL, that you know very well, or NRAL or others, and we need to take that work, we need to work with our interagency colleagues, we need to work with the Congress and really come up with a much more robust game plan for how we deal with these issues. So I look very forward to working with you on that issue.

CANTWELL: Great, well I definitely think we need to make more investments. We're going to have another round of discussion on infrastructure. I definitely plan on proposing more investments in the grid as part of the infrastructure goals for the United States. I think Senator Daines is next.