

Senator Maria Cantwell

**U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
Executive Session**

May 25, 2022

Opening Remarks

[VIDEO](#)

Senator Cantwell: The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation will come to order. I appreciate member's attendance today, we're here to do an Executive Session on a number of bills critically important to both side of the aisle and all of us together.

First, I want to say my thoughts and prayers are with the Uvalde people of Texas, the families that were impacted and all of those who are struggling with this horrific event. Our thoughts and prayers are with them.

Today we're going to consider legislation co-sponsored by Senator Wicker, Senator Lummis, Senator Blackburn that would for the first time direct the Office of Science and Technology Policy and the National Science Foundation and NIST to develop the national R&D strategy to address risk opportunities to distributed ledger technologies – better known to most of us as blockchain

Our USICA bill recognizes the need to invest in cutting edge technologies including distributed ledgers, so I appreciate my colleague's efforts on this effort here. The Wicker-Cantwell substitute will ensure that the national R&D strategy consider the increasing use of this technology by minority communities in conducting business. Underrepresented communities have often been ignored when it comes to thinking about these new technologies and that will not be the case here.

Next, we have the Fire Relief Nation Act by myself and Senator Sullivan. I want to thank Senator Wicker and his team for working with us on this bill. Last year, our state's wildfire burned more than 670,000 acres. 73% burned from fires started by lightning strikes. So weather is a very important aspect of predictability.

The terrible fires we're witnessing today in Senator Luján's state of New Mexico are spreading rapidly because of unexpected wind conditions.

It's clear that when we are dealing with wildfire -- weather matters. This bill focuses on improving forecasting abilities and accuracy on forecasters with wildland fire teams, and more precisely predict fire movement in real time. It supports advances and weather technology.

On the issue of compensation, I want to thank Senator Sinema I recognize her work. She has been leading on the HSGAC Committee to address compensation limits for all wildland firefighters. I know there's more to do on that and so I certainly appreciate her leadership and I want to continue to work with you.

Senator Peters and Lummis are co-sponsoring the Combating Human Rights Abuse Act which we'll also consider. This bill is designed to ensure that Department of Commerce professionals are educating U.S. companies that might consider doing business in Xinjiang Region about the significant human rights abuses and other ethnic minorities from the Chinese government.

This bill also directs the Department to provide guidance on ways to avoid doing business with entities under the government's influence of potential legal, economic, reputational, and other risks associated with it.

We'll also be considering the Advanced Aviation Infrastructure Modernization Act by Senators Padilla and Moran. This is about how to get air mobility capacity planning for the future and I thank them for that legislation.

And finally, the Transportation Fuel Market Transparency Act. The rising prices of fuel is wreaking havoc on consumers' price book. And as we just saw yesterday, with the Department of Justice filing one of the largest settlement cases in our country's history, \$1.1 billion for oil market manipulation. I want to thank all of the agencies that have been working on that important case. But clearly we can be giving them additional tools on the transparency of oil markets as it relates to the petroleum markets.

As we heard from expert witnesses last month, transparency is almost on all of our commodities [markets] "except for the gaping hole in the center" of oil and gas markets.

Congress has given the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Commodities Future Trading Commission ability to police bad actors then they can be caught and punished. But we also need a policeman on the beat as it relates to the transportation fuel market.