

## **U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell**

### **Floor Speech on FCC Nominee Nathan Simington**

**December 8, 2020**

CANTWELL: Thank you, Madam President. I come to the floor today to urge my colleagues to vote against the nomination of Nathan Simington to be a member of the Federal Communications Commission. We definitely want the F.C.C. to focus on commonsense consumer protections, universal broadband, the survival of our news and local journalism industry as it faces unbelievable unfair competition and practices by the tech sector, and we also want to make sure that the next President of the United States also gets to choose their member and representation to the F.C.C.

The Senate has a tradition of confirming Commission nominees in pairs to assure the equality of both sides of the aisle. Moving this nominee without that Democratic pairing, I think, is contrary to what we've usually operated under in good governance. Every member of this body should be concerned about setting a precedent and what it'll mean in the future, if we don't have essential consumer protections and oversight on this important—this important institution.

We need high-quality, affordable broadband to the underserved and to the unserved. That includes Tribal country. We need to make sure that we are working hard as a result of the pandemic for people to need to understand that broadband now is essential—to our health care, to being able to work, and certainly to the education of our children. According to the AP, 16% of families with children have no access to broadband. And we need to make sure that all students have the tools for distance learning. We need to make sure that Washingtonians have access to broadband for health care, for clinics, to make sure their initial contacts can be done online, just in helping us fight the pandemic.

And especially, we need to preserve a free and open internet that is not divided into haves and have-nots. The innovation economy is so important to my state, but it's important to the entire United States. And we need to have nominees who will fight for these policies and get them implemented. That is why it is important that we look at FCC Commissioners. Mr. Simington was before our Commerce Committee. We had another nominee that the White House abruptly, unexpectedly pulled from its re-nomination, Commissioner O'Rielly, just days after the committee reported that nomination to the Senate. Allegedly, because he spoke his mind. Because he did not agree with the President of the United States. Mr. Simington was nominated instead just a few weeks later, coming from NTIA, which asks the FCC to issue rules. It raises questions in my mind about the White House's choice of Mr. Simington, particularly given these issues as it relates to the F.C.C. and key responsibilities.

I have questions about his neutrality and independence and issues before the Commission about whether he aggressively and actively sought the media attention to personally and explicitly direct pressure onto the FCC. This involvement might sound insignificant or just partisan to some, but it's so important for the FCC to continue

to play an important and independent role from the President of the United States. So I hope that we will not pass the Simington nomination. But I'm emphasizing to my colleagues: the president will deserve his nominee as well, and I hope our colleagues will move quickly to confirm them once they are nominated.

