

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell
Commerce Committee Gavel Transfer
February 11, 2021

CANTWELL: Well Senator Wicker, thank you so much for your leadership and your kind remarks. I can truly say, you are a gentleman. And I have so enjoyed working with you on a variety of issues, and I so appreciate your collegial attitude, even in the most intense periods of recognizing the challenges that we all face together.

So I too want to say a few words about those accomplishments in the last Congress that we were able to achieve. Obviously, moving forward on significant aviation reforms, which is everything from working with our colleagues Senators Moran, Blunt, and Duckworth on improvements to the aviation workforce and systems, to your leadership on the Coast Guard Bill and reauthorization that was included in the NDAA bill, which I'm pretty sure, is going to build some more ships, including the recognition of how important the Arctic and Northwest passages to the United States as a new form of commerce. And your leadership on issues of 5G and security that we have to think very hard about as we move forward as a nation.

I also want to thank your staff, John Kiest, and thank my staff director David Strickland, for their leadership and working through which seems to me to just be an ever-continuing series of COVID response bills. I don't know if anybody realizes how hard they work behind the scenes on all of these packages. They literally are the technical expertise on every section of that bill related to aviation and transportation, and they've done incredible work and I'm so proud that Mr. Strickland is going to be our staff director in the majority working, again, with your team and what is a 50-50 United States Senate.

I also want to take a moment to welcome the new members of the committee. I want to welcome the newest member on your side, Senator Lummis, another woman, giving us a record number of 10 women on this committee. I think that makes us the most women on any Committee in the United States Congress, and I welcome you and I thank you for your advocacy for cryptocurrency and look forward to discussing that issue with you. And I also want to welcome the three new members on our side, Senator Luján, who is continuing the New Mexico representation on this committee that Senator Udall worked so diligently on. I welcome him as a regulator and somebody who understands our electricity grid, so hopefully you'll work with Senator Wicker and I on these cybersecurity issues moving forward. Senator Hickenlooper, who comes as both a true businessman in commerce, but also a scientist, continuing Colorado's interest in the Commerce Committee. And we look forward to working with you on a range of those issues but using your science background of the committee's oversight on all our science issues. And Senator Warnock, who, I think if you think about the State of Georgia, represents a geographic area where transportation and transportation manufacturing play such a key role.

And to that point, one of the changes we are making on our subcommittee level is to take the manufacturing piece and make it aviation and national manufacturing strategies to include all of the manufacturing issues that come before our committee. And hope that we can do a better job of marrying up the future infrastructure needs of our nation and manufacturing workforce issues to better power the United States.

Well, if you'll indulge me on one short Northwest aspect of today, Senator Warren Magnuson, a guy from Moorhead, Minnesota, came to the United States Senate and chaired this committee for a couple of decades. So, 35 years ago, as a young worker in the state of Washington, I had an opportunity to go over to Senator Magnuson's house in Magnolia, Washington, it's a little neighborhood of Seattle, and have coffee with him and Senator Dan Inouye. And believe me, they regaled us with a lot of history and a lot of stories about the

Commerce Committee. I had no idea that many years ago that I'd be sitting in this seat today. And the most important thing about, I think, that day, and those two individuals who some of us actually got to know, is that this committee can operate in a collegial fashion. We can get important work done for the people of the United States.

Most importantly, Senator Magnuson partnered with Senator Stevenson on what is called the Magnuson-Stevenson Act. A fundamental fisheries management policy that still served our nation and still, I think, benefits us greatly. Magnuson ushered in the Magnuson-Moss Act which was about consumer warranties. A senator from Utah the time who basically said you know this committee has to do good consumer product safety work and just remind people that were here to serve the people in the aspects of Commerce and I think one of the most significant contributions of that time in this committee was the 1964 Civil Rights Act introduced in this Committee in 1963 by Mike Mansfield and Warren Magnuson. They basically said in the accommodations clause, that basically in the commerce clause that unequal accommodations were unfair and unjust and needed to be resolved. In fact then Attorney General Robert Kennedy came before this committee to basically give testimony and witness to that. The reason I say all of that is because I feel like this committee has just as big of challenges but is up to meeting those challenges.

One we have to continue addressing the COVID pandemic and the crisis in the impact that it's having on our economy. We're right now in the midst of another transportation package to help revive our economy and help continue to work. We are looking to our FTC to make sure that there are no fraudulent products and materials out here, like masks, that my state is facing. Mr. Chairman, I'm planning to send a letter to the FTC today asking them to investigate this fraudulent mask exposure that the Washington State Hospital Association has uncovered. And our committee will have to, in the COVID pandemic, come up with what is our infrastructure response to keep our infrastructure moving. And I look forward to working with everybody on this committee.

Second I think our challenge is, well I just like to say, we just we live in an information age and we just have to own up to it. To me it's better to prepare for that information age, so everything from privacy to broadband to AI to cybersecurity to STEM, I look forward to working with all my colleagues have had so much legislation introduced on that.

And third and lastly, I do think our committee has to work hard in this information age at the disparities that we have in our economy. I do think, just like this committee dealt with the 1964 Civil Rights Act, I do think that we can work together. The chairman--former Chairman--has been quite effective and working with historical black colleges. I hope that he and Senator Warnock can join us in some of these strategies to work together. And, to my fellow colleagues, all of you but particularly the women, I hope that we can do a better job on strategies to help women in the workforce, particularly in the STEM fields of science, technology, engineering, and math. I may be the first woman of this committee, but I can tell you this--I don't plan on being the last one. So thank you Mr. Chairman, and we can proceed with today's business.