

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

PNNL Grid Storage Launchpad Groundbreaking

April 21, 2021

Cantwell: Well thank you Dr. Ashby. It is really great to be here. I want to thank Michael Pesin for being here from the Department, and Julie Turner. Obviously I want to thank our local representatives who are here, Dave Hackney, Matt, and Mark Klicker, and Commissioner Rasmussen. All of these people have played critical roles in this and we very much appreciate it.

I'm thrilled to be here today because I think this is a very important milestone. In fact, I actually taped a video of this a week ago and as soon as I sat down to tape it, I said, "Why am I not going in person?" And they said, "Well just in case you don't get out." And I said, "I want to be there in person."

And the reason I wanted to do that is because this is a very important problem to solve and people in the Tri-Cities, just like another chapter of our history, people of the Tri-Cities are going to solve this problem. More and more people now recognize that long duration, low cost, grid scale, energy storage is one of the key milestones we have to meet in our nation if we are going to reduce our dependence on fossil fuel and if we are going to have a grid of the future. We know that wind and solar are now the cheapest forms of new electricity generation, but of course not when it's not windy or sunny. And so, we need to make improvements in our storage capacity to integrate those powers.

We know that supplies fluctuate. We know demand spikes. We know that extreme weather knocks our grid out of its sources of electricity. We know that grid scale energy is needed to fill the gaps. And that is why we are here today. Because more than ever, our region, and our nation, and even, yes, even our planet, needs energy storage solutions that are going to take us into the future. And that is why we are going to break ground on a building and put a hundred of the best scientist from around the globe in a building and put them right here in the Tri-Cities to go solve that problem.

We want them to deliver on storage solutions that will help decarbonize our grid. But as was already mentioned there are a few things we really want them to do. We want them to test storage materials. We want them to test systems under incredible stress. And we also want them to reduce the time it takes energy technologies to solutions. Why? We have no time to wait.

Partnering with industry, the speed of innovation and the transfer of the R&D funds that the government is going to put into the equation will help us meet this challenge. Energy storage is going to be one of the largest economic opportunities of the 21st century. By the end of 2030, analysts predict there will be 20 times more energy storage online than at the end of 2020.

At that scale, it will require more than a \$262 billion investment. So this facility that we are going to break ground on, will help us insure that we are in a position to create those opportunities for people here in the United States. We know that we need a smarter grid: one that is able to analyze and distribute bidirectional power for millions of these new nodes, and we need it done at the speed of light.

I just want to give a shout out to Jud Virden and Carl Imhofe who have done great work in this space for a long time. They have helped me, since 2007, author various bills that have helped make our grid

smarter. I guess, if you'd say, "what role did I play?", because there are a lot of people who played key roles, I was just the chief pesterer. Okay? So everyone that came before the energy committee in the last three years, basically has the question put before them, "Are you going to support the grid launch storage program, the grid storage launch pad, and don't you think that the PNNL is the right place for that?"

So, I'm happy to work with my colleague Senator Murray, our Congressman Newhouse, and others to support the appropriations we were able to get in 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 that now puts us at that \$75 million.

So, I want to again thank Director Ashby for his vision. Because without his vision and leadership, this would not have gone from the blackboard, all the way to this multimillion dollar facility. We owe him a great deal of gratitude for the brilliant work in the early days of this idea and making it a reality. And thank you to the Department of Energy, specifically the Washington Legislature and the State for their contributions and the Patel, for the impact they have had as well.

Know that you will continue to have everybody in our delegations support to make the Launchpad the premier energy storage facility in the world. That's what we are going to break ground on today, and the rest of it is on the Tri-Cities to help deliver on the next energy future.

Thank you.