

## Senator Maria Cantwell

### Floor Speech on the Nomination of Scott Pruitt to be Administrator of the E.P.A.

February 16, 2017

Ms. Cantwell: For the last 47 years the E.P.A. has enforced science-based environmental laws and policies that have resulted in the clean air, clean water, and the clean-up of some of our nation's most contaminated lands which led to a healthier America. Bipartisan administrators of the Environmental Protection Agency, everybody from a great Washingtonian, Bill Ruckelshaus to Gina McCarthy, took on the role as E.P.A. Administrator knowing it was their responsibility to protect existing environmental law and to let science be the guide on research and new policies. They took the E.P.A. mission to heart and they fought to protect human health and the environment. I have questions about whether the nominee, Mr. Pruitt, follows those same values, and I come to the floor to oppose his nomination as Administrator of E.P.A. Mr. Pruitt has repeatedly attacked needed E.P.A. regulations and he supports polluters at the expense of the environment and health laws. And he doesn't believe that scientifically proven issues of climate change are real.

Less than a year ago, when the Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt was working in their state, was quoted as saying, quote, "scientists continue to disagree about the degree and extent of global warming and connections to mankind" in the Tulsa World. When questioned during the hearing process he said "human activity contributes in some manner but the degree of contribution is subject to more debate," end quote. The reason why I ask and raise these questions is because this issue of "climate impact" is so real in the state of Washington. It is already happening and already affecting our industries. As E.P.A. administrator, Mr. Pruitt would have the responsibility for setting the agency's agenda, including how to respond to climate change, and yet the fact that he doesn't support the existing climate change science puts him in a role where I think he would not protect these economic interests of our state. We cannot have a lackadaisical attitude about these issues. It is not a hypothesis. It is here. It is happening.

In the Pacific Northwest, it is altering our region's water cycle, putting Washington and their farms and jobs in a \$51 billion agricultural economy at risk. Wildfire seasons are longer and more severe than ever. It's costing our nation billions of dollars. And warmer water temperatures in our streams and rivers have degraded habitat and our fishing industry challenged. With 25% of carbon going into our waters, it is raising the acidity level, and that is impacting the chemistry of Puget Sound. Oceans and their absorption of carbon dioxide emission and these acidic conditions are making it hard for our shellfish industry to do the type of seeding that needs to take place. It's severely impacting the 278 million-dollar shellfish industry. Ocean acidification has been found to dissolve the shells of these important species and our ocean acidification efforts then carry up the food chain if they are not addressed.

So if we have an E.P.A. Administrator who isn't going to work to cut down on carbon emissions and thinks that it's only part of the impact, there are a lot of Northwest jobs at stake. For example, our maritime economy is worth \$30 billion. So I would say that's a lot at stake. In looking at the Attorney General of Oklahoma, Scott Pruitt's record, he fought E.P.A. regulations that protect public health, including the cross state air pollution rule, the regional haze rule, clean air standard for oil and gas sites, and the clean water rule. And despite this issue of repeatedly suing the E.P.A., he recently told congress, quote, "I do not expect previous lawsuits to adversely affect my performance as E.P.A. Administrator," end quote. Well, I have serious concerns that Mr. Pruitt's past lawsuits will continue in an aggressive

attitude as E.P.A. Administrator and not fighting for the things that are going to protect jobs and the economy in Washington state that count so much on a pristine environment.

773 former E.P.A. employees that served under Democrat and Republican administrations sent a letter stating, quote, "Mr. Pruitt's record and public statement strongly suggest he does not share the vision or agree with the underlying principles of our environmental statutes," end quote. So this does not, all of this record does not give me the confidence that he's the right person to lead this agency at this point in time. But there are other issues.

During his time as Oklahoma Attorney General, Scott Pruitt planned the, quote, "Summit on Federalism and the Future of Fossil Fuels." This summit brought together energy industry executives with Attorney Generals to strategize against E.P.A., and specifically discuss E.P.A.'s overreaching, as they put it, in a very important issue called the Pebble Mine. The Pebble Mine is an attempt by some who want to actually establish a gold mine in the very place of one of the most successful salmon habitats in the entire world, Bristol Bay in Alaska. The E.P.A. followed the letter of the law, and in a multiyear science-based assessment of Bristol Bay, basically made sure that everybody understood what was at risk. That Pebble Mine would destroy up to 94 miles of salmon spawning streams. It would devastate anywhere from 1,000 to 5,000 acres of wetlands. And it would create 10 billion of toxic mine waste, which is enough to nearly bury parts of Seattle. And all this would occur in the headwaters of the greatest salmon fishery on earth, where half of the sockeye salmon on the planet spawn. So the notion that this is how this nominee would spend his time, as I said, the mine itself is a direct threat to 1.5 billion-dollar industry in Bristol Bay in salmon. That's 14,000 jobs just in the Pacific Northwest. So the importance of the salmon fishery, the importance of making sure that that mine is not located there is of utmost importance, I say, to the entire Pacific Northwest salmon fishery.

So I want to make sure that we're putting someone in place here who's going to fight for the things and the laws that are on the books and to show the leadership, not spend time trying to undermine the agency and organization with its existing authority. He would be, if he allowed Bristol Bay to go forward, devastating to our state. It would be voting in favor of these polluters and instead making sure that we are protecting science and environmental law. So I have very serious concerns, and that is why I'm opposing this nominee. I hope that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will realize that these economies, the ones that depend on clean air and clean water, safe salmon spawning ground, doing the right thing to protect what is really our stewardship of this planet we're only on for a very short period of time, that they would consider all of this and oppose this nominee. I thank the president, and I yield the floor.