

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

Opening Statement at the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation Executive Session to Consider the Nomination of Governor Raimondo to be Commerce Secretary

February 3, 2021

Cantwell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would be tempted if we had all our votes here to just be very brief but since I think we're still waiting for a few members to arrive, let me hit on a few points.

First, I want to congratulate President Biden for nominating Governor Raimondo. I think it's very important that we have somebody at the Department of Commerce who is from the private sector. And we're blessed with Governor Raimondo's being both in the public sector and the private sector, and I think that will give her a great deal of insights to the many challenges facing our economy, the competitiveness of businesses, the challenges of the information age, and what we need to do to help skill a workforce to be able to take advantages of that economy of the future.

As the first woman to be governor of the State of Rhode Island, I think she accomplished a wide range of impressive programs but I'm most impressed by the Real Jobs Rhode Island Initiative. We all know that we need to marry up our future businesses with the skilled workers that they're looking for. This program, the Real Jobs Rhode Island Initiative, served more than 1,700 employers and 11,000 people throughout the state. As a result, she was able to send her state's unemployment rate tumbling to a 30 year low. I'm a firm believer that matching the workforce needs to those of key industry sectors is a way for all of us to see economic growth in the United States, and to help support businesses that are competing on an international basis. I particularly am very supportive of trade policy and export policy, and so I want us to be very good at competing on an international level.

I also am very excited that Governor Raimondo understands, coming from a coastal state, the important issues of the maritime issues before this committee, particularly NOAA's issues on science, weather forecast, fisheries management, coastal restoration, NTIA spectrum management, and NIST research and standard setting so the department's role supporting trade and many other issues are focused on within that sector. As one former Commerce secretary said, "I can guarantee you, if a member of Congress is calling me, even though I'm the Secretary of Commerce, they're calling me about fish." So, these are important issues and having a governor that understands really the historic aspect of a fishing economy, I think will serve our committee well.

And so, Mr. Chairman, I think that all of us have many places to be this morning, but I hope that we will all support Governor Raimondo for her willingness to step up at this extraordinary time in our country's history. I hope that we'll use that private sector experience to communicate President Biden's message about our competitiveness in commerce, and hopefully help us in the many aspects of the Department of Commerce within our committee and dialoguing with members about some of those strategies for America's competitiveness. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.