

**U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell**  
**Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources**  
**Nomination Hearing on Chris Wright to be the Secretary of Energy**  
**January 15, 2025**

[Q&A, VIDEO | AUDIO](#)

**Sen. Cantwell:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And before I begin my question, I just want to comment on, you know, I've been on this Committee since working with Chairman Murkowski, I mean Frank Markowski, which means I've served with a lot of Chairmen and a lot of different Committees. This committee has debated and argued over a lot of issues, but paperwork has never been one of them.

So, I just hope that everybody will take a deep breath and understand that transparency in the process here is all that people want. And I think, I know that people are anxious in the new administration to get their people. We want them to have that opportunity, but the transparency that it takes to just get the paperwork and have time for people to digest it is important, and I think everything will go smoother if we can get that done.

Mr. Wright, congratulations on your nomination, and as my colleagues have said, thanks for your willingness to serve. I have to start with Hanford cleanup. I think you could go back to my record on every Energy Secretary, and that's where we would always start. I mean, we [Hanford] played a very important role for our nation during World War II. We're very proud of that, but the cleanup after the Manhattan Project also has to be historic and committed to over a long period of time.

I've definitely voted for Republicans to be Energy Secretary, but they've also committed to cleaning up Hanford. And I want to ask you about your same commitment. We as a state, and the Department of Energy, entered into a Tri-Party agreement that has been updated recently into a final agreement.

Will you commit to upholding the commitment that DOE has made to the time frame and clean-up of Hanford waste? And usually what happens is Energy Secretaries are... actually that's not true... OMB people come in and say, oh, we can save money, we can do cleanup on the cheap, or we can get it done faster. Most of the time, those ideas go in the trash can, but it puts you in a horrible situation, because you have to fight for those dollars.

So, will you commit to upholding the Tri-Party agreement between DOE and the State of Washington and others in supporting Hanford cleanup and advocating for a budget that represents that commitment?

**Chris Wright:** Senator, I can't overstate how critical I think it is to finish the job, finish the cleanup at Hanford. The majority of our country's plutonium was produced there, not just for World War II, but the post war period and our arsenal today. So, Hanford gave a lot to this country, and we behind, left a mess, and that needs to be cleaned up.

It's being cleaned up, thanks in part to your efforts and many in your state to push for that. But I am firmly committed to continuing our obligations and our moral obligation to clean up the mess that was left in your state.

**Sen. Cantwell:** Under that legal framework?

**Chris Wright:** I... will...

**Sen. Cantwell:** You can take it for the record, but you need to look at that and just say, 'Yes, I believe in that legal framework.'

You know, it's the process. That's where people get into trouble because somebody else tries to redefine the agreement that's been made, or let's just make it simpler. They try to redefine what is the waste, and then they tried to reclassify very hazardous waste into something else, and then just say, we're just going to leave it in the tanks or grounds which are leaking, and we don't want those leaky tanks and those sources of very severe issues.

Okay, secondly, do you believe in upholding investments in our capabilities, in our national labs, particularly when it comes to the issue of AI and Quantum. I think you and I had a chance to have this conversation. We think both of these things have major implications, but we have to have our labs continuing to play a leadership role with the right amount of funding to continue a very important, competitive national security agenda for our nation.

**Chris Wright:** I agree very much with your comment and your question, Senator, and PNNL has done fabulous work in this area. Cybersecurity is a growing threat. It's not obvious to all Americans, because we don't see it, but it's the infiltration into our systems, across our government and our industry from foreign actors, is huge, and driving that research forward is critical for the security of our country, economic, and geopolitical, security of our country.

**Sen. Cantwell:** Great. I know you know a lot about fusion. Do you think it's time that we look at fusion? And, let's just say, the Tri-Cities is doing everything okay, so they're very much a hub for a lot of different energy innovation because of both the long history of the Hanford cleanup and the National Lab footprint, and a lot of just natural resource issues.

But do you think when it comes to fusion that we ought to be more aggressive thinking about, in case this does become a reality -- supply chain and grid integration. Do you think that it would behoove us as a nation to be faster at our deployment of such technology if we knew what those supply chain issues were now in identifying them and identifying what a faster process for getting something like that integrated into the grid would look like?

**Chris Wright:** Yes, yes, Senator. This is an exciting new technology with, again, just huge room to run, and it's moved very rapidly. The last decade has seen more progress than in my lifetime, and I would love to see that come to commercial power in the next decade.

**Sen. Cantwell:** Great. And then just last, DOE has invested more than \$14 billion in U.S. power grid, and many states have had grid resiliency programs. I hope you will continue to support those projects.

**Chris Wright:** Grid resiliency, as I've talked throughout this hearing, is critical. It's the most urgent energy issue we have today.

**Sen. Cantwell:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.