

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

**Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources - Full Committee Hearing to Consider
Pending Nominations**

April 10, 2025

[\[VIDEO\]](#) | [\[AUDIO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Thank you, Dr Gil. I represent Bill Nye the Science Guy, but I'm more than happy to say Dr. Gil, the DOE Science Guy, and make sure that we keep our investments. One of those investments is in the area of AI and quantum both the Pacific Northwest Lab and Microsoft are using quantum computing and AI high [performance computing] for all sorts of different issues: battery research, computer approaches, simulating turbulence, superconductors. So do you support the National Quantum Initiative reauthorization, and if confirmed, would you work with my staff and members of this committee to advance it?

Dr. Gil: Senator, thank you for your question and for your support on these topics for so many years, I really appreciate your leadership on that you are not going to find a more enthusiastic person on supporting the National Quantum Initiative. And my challenge would be: How do we become even bolder on what we achieve on that?

And the way I frame that thinking is, not only do we need to support the centers that National Quantum Initiative created and the fundamental science, but we got to now combine that aspiration with delivering a capability for the nation. So, just like in the past, we built CPU-centric supercomputers, like recently, we built GPU-centric supercomputers, we have to build a quantum-centric supercomputer, and that will mobilize and activate the National Quantum Initiative centers towards a goal, and we have to deliver that goal. So [I'm a] huge supporter of that effort.

Sen. Cantwell: So that's about test bedding?

Dr. Gil: Test bedding is an element, but it's also to use all of those things, the scientific research, the test beds, but to give it a goal is build a capability with this performance at this cost. Just like when we would build in the past, El Capitan or any other supercomputers, there's a definitive timeline and definitive set of dollars to deliver a capability that leads the world. I think we need to do the same thing in quantum.

Sen. Cantwell: Thank you. Thank you. I appreciate that answer. Mr. Griffith, obviously, I'm a big supporter of BPA and what it delivers in cost based power. I think we need to give BPA more support, not less. They have committed to \$5 billion in grid upgrades using borrowing authority this Committee approved as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act. I want to submit a letter for the record that -- I'm sorry, an article for the record written by former two former BPA leaders, Randy Hardy and Steve Wright, and I want to quote. They say, "we can say, with confidence is the level of risk now with the existing workforce reductions is unacceptably high, and at some point further reductions would make outages practically inevitable."

So, that concerns me when two former BPA Administrators make those kind of statements. I appreciate that DOGE has already allowed the BPA to rehire some of those probationary employees, but I want to ask you, do you believe the BPA workforce should be exempt from the current hiring freeze and future force reductions?

Griffith: Thank you, Senator, for your question. I obviously haven't been confirmed, and don't know -- I've read similar reports, and I don't think I saw that one that you submitted for the record, but should I be confirmed, I look forward to getting up to speed and prioritizing it. I worked in the last Trump Administration, the first one, and understand the important role that BPA and the Power Marketing Administrations, other PMAs, have in delivering affordable, reliable energy from our hydroelectric resources. And I'm committed to working with you and your office, this Committee, to do that should I be confirmed.

Sen. Cantwell: Do you commit to articulate BPA's safety and reliability role when considering any RIF proposals.

Griffith: Senator, again, I don't know exactly what is happening in the Department or any discussions, but I will prioritize working with the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, and the rest of the team on this issue, if confirmed to--

Sen. Cantwell: I'm just asking you whether you will raise safety and reliability roles. That's a pretty easy --

Griffith: Oh, safety and reliability are obviously very important to the grid, BPA, and all of the utilities and PMAs, and I think we'll continue to prioritize the reliability, the security and the resilience of our grid, including at the PMAs.

Sen. Cantwell: Do you commit to oppose any proposal to auction off PMA assets, including those owned by BPA.

Griffith: Sorry, could you repeat the question?

Sen. Cantwell: Yes. Do you commit to oppose any proposals to auction off PMA assets, including those owned by BPA?

Griffith: Yes, Senator, I think BPA is a very important piece of the Department, and it plays an important role. I'm not aware of any discussions or conversations about selling it off, but I think we -- I don't -- so I really can't commit.

Sen. Cantwell: I think if Senator Risch were here, he'd be backing me up at this moment, and he'd be encouraging you to say that you don't believe in selling off BPA, but you--

Griffith: I don't know if there's -- not being confirmed, I don't know any conversations that are happening in the building. It's not something that I would be a proponent of.

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