U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

Remarks at Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act Presser

November 17, 2026

[VIDEO]

Sen. Cantwell: Thank you so much, Calley, and thank you to everybody for joining this briefing. And I want to thank everybody who has taken time out to join from the press side as well. I'll be brief because it's a powerful group, and I want you to hear from them.

But needless to say, this process has been one in which we didn't have hearings, didn't have a markup, came to the Senate floor – basically came to the Senate floor without much notice and debate in the manager's amendment within like 24 hours of us being asked to vote on it right at the aftermath of an election, and so I just feel like it hasn't gotten the attention that it deserves.

So that's [what] we're doing today. These stakeholders know what it means. They know what safeguards are. They know what tribal sovereignty is. They know what clean water is, and the protections that they're talking about today didn't happen just overnight.

Generations of Americans have fought for these rights, and their voices deserve to be heard. Congress is being asked to vote on a sweeping proposal that would rewrite some of these important environmental laws. And as written, I think these provisions are certainly very dangerous.

Real people, entire communities, institutions, protections of our natural resources would be affected, and I think generations would suffer because of it. Let me share a couple of examples. The Formosa Plastics Sunshine Project in Louisiana, a massive petrochemical complex from a Taiwanese company, wants to build right next to a vulnerable low-income community.

Community groups challenged its permits, and the Army Corps of Engineers suspended its wetland permit and required a fuller environmental review. But if this bill passes, the ability of those locals to protect the clean air that they breathe or the water they drink would be limited.

Destroying water protections and silencing tribes might threaten our –or poison– salmon streams, that would be very devastating to Northwest fishing interests. Bristol Bay, something that I've long fought for – hard protections from the federal government, not to build a mine on one of the basically pristine waters and the biggest source of our salmon.

After years of efforts, a broad coalition of tribes, fishermen, and [the] EPA chose to use the Clean Water Act to protect one of its greatest salmon fisheries. But if this bill passes, Pebble Mine could reapply and put the Bristol Bay watershed and the salmon at risk.

And the third example is just on tribal lands and silencing tribal nations in the permitting process. This is such a negative thing. Ancestral burial grounds could be bulldozed. Sacred sites could be destroyed. Irreplaceable artifacts.

We had one of these instances happen in my state where people were building a graving dock right on top of a ancient 3,000-year-old civilization, and people just kept going. But thank God we were using

some of these resources to object. The Resolution Copper Mine also imperils an area of the Apache people.

Tribal advocates have fought to protect religious practices. But if this bill passes, it would narrow federal historic preservation reviews and restrict courts' ability to halt those projects. So why are we doing this? Now is the time to slow this process down to have our colleagues have a chance to ask questions about the impacts of this, to actually have a formal process.

Don't sacrifice the Clean Water Act, or hunting, or fishing grounds, historic or sacred sites, or protections of tribal sovereignty. We all need new sources of energy and power. I've been committed to that my whole time in the United States Senate. But this bill, as it's currently drafted, is not the answer.