

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

Energy and Natural Resources Hearing on the President's FY25 Budget Request

April, 16, 2024

Sen. Cantwell Q&A with Energy Secretary Granholm

[\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary, thank you so much for coming to the Pacific Northwest and looking at all the transformation that's underway that our region is helping with, and you are leading. And so we very much appreciate that.

I wanted to ask you, obviously, about the Hanford budget, we're very pleased that the request is an increase from what we secured last year. So, thanks to the administration, and Senator Murray and my colleagues for that. We're proud of the work that we need to do to meet the milestones.

In a couple of weeks, U.S. Department of Energy and the State Department of Ecology and Environmental Protection will be announcing a conclusion of holistic negotiations to update the consent decree. And you know how important that triparty agreement is.

This is a result of long talks to improve the removal of waste from 177 underground tanks that contain the most dangerous and difficult [waste from] decades of plutonium [production]. And so, obviously, I want a commitment on the future tank negotiations to make sure that they have milestones. And can you detail how you will roll out the agreement and get comments so that we know that you, DOE, is taking that seriously.

I also, sorry to throw a lot at you, but I figured I'd just throw it all out and you can help respond. And if we run out of time we can respond for the record. I do hear concerns about, also, the transformation of the Tri-Cities past these things. You know, they obviously think, and are, really, a clean energy hub for a lot of deployment. So they want to know what can happen on the transformation of acreage to a broader range of clean energy development.

So I understand a vision has been shared with DOE officials, but the current DOE plan would not allow for this kind of development. So I want to make sure that we're continuing to think about how the Tri-Cities continues to play this massive leadership role on energy transformation.

You answered Senator Manchin's point about the hydrogen hubs, I just want to weigh in, because I feel like this is such a critical point to get these 45V credits done correctly. I'm assuming you agree that the whole point of this is to decarbonize hard to decarbonize sectors like maritime and aviation, fertilizer, and things of that nature. So our goal, and my question is, should our goal really be reaching this decarbonization within the sectors?

I think some people are thinking that we should go a different route. I mean, it would be like if we said at the very beginning of electric vehicles, you can only charge an electric vehicle from clean energy. And so the whole point is, what is the milestone going to give us for 45V? I'm assuming that we want to try to, by 2050, cut, in these sectors, cut the carbon by some significant amount, and that should be the goal of 45V. So you can tell me whether you agree with that.

I'm curious on fusion, whether you think 48C should be applied to fusion. We're also a hub in this particular area, and want to know whether you think we should be thinking about broadening that.

And then on the transmission. To my colleague's point, we will need 56% more transmission by 2040. That's according to you and your estimates. And the Pacific Northwest Power and Conservation Council calculates the region will need 3,500 megawatts of new renewable energy by 2027. So what can you do to help us make sure, since most of our transmission comes from BPA, how can you help us make sure transmission gets built? Oh, my gosh, I can see I'm.

Sec. Granholm: Can I just quickly hit them?

Sen. Cantwell: I think, since officially I think I'm chairing at the moment, so yes, go ahead.

Sec. Granholm: Ok, so, madam chair, may I?

Sen. Cantwell: Quickly, because my colleagues.

Sec. Granholm: Yes. Just very quickly.

Hanford, yes. Exciting that they're reaching conclusion, obviously we will work with the community and make sure that it's transparent.

Clean up to clean energy, which is one of the things you talked about. We've taken an RFP, request for proposals. We've gotten those, we're evaluating them. We're also in the process of transferring about 150, I want to say, acres to the Tri-Cities area for economic development too, so again, continuing to work with them very, very closely.

Hydrogen is the Swiss Army knife, as everybody has said, of clean energy, and yes, decarbonization has to be a key component of it, in addition to its other uses.

Sen. Cantwell: So you think, just on that point, you think in the next few years, if we went for some short term goal of just driving production of the hydrogen, look, we're a very green source. I mean, that's why I think we won the hub, because we're a green source, but the whole point is to significantly decarbonize the sector, is that correct?

Sec. Granholm: That's correct.

Sen. Cantwell: Okay. So that overall goal should be part of the calculation.

Sec. Granholm: Absolutely.

Sen. Cantwell: Ok, thank you.

Sec. Granholm: Fusion and 48C. Interesting. I hadn't thought about that. And I'd like to have further conversations about it. I know that those decisions have been made by Treasury already in the first round of 48C, and we don't have insight into that since it's tax information and proprietary. So I'm not even sure, unless the entities who received the designation raise their hands.

Sen. Cantwell: Do you think if we really do, are on the precipice of a fusion hit, that the manufacturing aspect for the United States and acceleration of this would be a good idea?

Sec. Granholm: Certainly. Oh, yeah, of course it would be good idea. Yeah, absolutely.

And on transmission, I just refer again, I wanted to say, we have got to increase our transmission capacity. Reconductoring is one of the ways to do that, grid enhancing technologies like dynamic line reading is another way to do that. We have got to have a full suite of strategies, in addition to building new transmission, but making our current transmission stronger, better, and able to have greater capacity is also a key component of it.

Sen. Cantwell: Well, I just want to thank you. I mean, we've had other energy secretaries and they've been part of this equation, but you are making the transformation happen. It's not easy, and you're able to articulate how and why it's so critical. So thank you.

Sec. Granholm: Thank you.