

Senator Maria Cantwell  
Opening Statement for July 22, 2020 Mark-Up

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to marking up some of the important legislation that you just mentioned in today's session.

We will consider the FUTURE of Artificial Intelligence Act, legislation I authored along with my colleagues Senator Young and Senator Markey. I want to thank Senator Young for working with us on this important legislation. Today in an era of rapidly evolving technology, it is more important that the U.S. remains a global leader in this sector. Our legislation would create definitions for "artificial intelligence," "narrow AI," and "artificial general intelligence" and direct the Secretary of Commerce to create a federal advisory committee on these issues.

Also on the topic of AI, Chairman Wicker and Senators Gardner and Peters have done great work on the Advancing Artificial Intelligence Research Act. This bill would authorize AI research and standards activities at NSF and NIST. These standards through thorough examination would look at the effects of AI on society and ethical and privacy AI challenges. Protecting consumer privacy and data is priority number one.

I appreciate the work done by Senators Whitehouse, Murkowski, and Schatz on the BLUE GLOBE Act. Our country's bodies of water, such as its Great Lakes, oceans, and estuaries, must be protected and cared for. This bill introduces provisions addressing issues such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, and includes provisions that increase atmospheric science workforce development and define the values of the U.S. "blue economy. Last night we received some important feedback from the National [Native] American Rights Fund and the Bering Sea Elders Group about this bill. Senator Schatz was able to strike the section that needs further discussion from the bill we are voting on today, but it's essential that we get this right. Mr. Chairman, please continue to work with us on this important tribal issue for indigenous voices so that they're fully incorporated in this important legislation.

We are also considering the Living Shorelines Act introduced by Senators Harris, Blumenthal, Markey, and Baldwin. I want to thank the Chairman also for working with us and Senator Blumenthal's staff to find common ground on this legislation. More than 25% of the Puget Sound shoreline in "hard-armored" rather than protected by natural materials. We've already seen the Duwamish River how installing living shorelines in these areas provide habitat for juvenile salmon and increases the vegetation that filters pollutants out of the water, while still preventing erosion and flooding to our residents. Living shorelines are a win for the environment and a win for the economy, and a bill that will support the expanded use of these innovation tools on a nationwide basis.

I want to thank Senators Rosen, Fischer, Young, Blumenthal, Schatz and Markey for their work on the Data Mapping to Save Moms' Lives Act. This important legislation directs the Federal Communications

Commission to include certain information on maternal health outcomes in its online broadband health mapping tool. So thank you, Senator Rosen.

Efficiency and safety when it comes to airport projects is key. I want to thank Senators Young, Sinema, and Cruz for introducing the Expedited Delivery of Airport Infrastructure Act. I know this has been a big priority of Senator Young for a long time, so I appreciate his leadership on this. This legislation would allow airport sponsors to use up to 1 million dollars from the FAA's Airport Improvement Program to finish airport projects early, while still saving all of us money. So I appreciate that.

I also am pleased to see the Sport Fish Restoration and Recreational Boating Safety Act on the mark-up today, legislation I have co-sponsored with the Chairman. Funding for conservation and outdoor recreation is vital for Washington and our citizens. This bill would continue to ensure funding for activities through the reauthorization of the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund through 2025. It will also make important outdoor recreation safer, by authorizing studies on the impacts of increasing non-motorized vehicle use, and solutions for derelict vessels on our waterways.

Finally, we are considering the Airport Infrastructure Readiness Act, legislation introduced by Senators Fischer, Cruz, Sinema, and Duckworth. The COVID crisis has had a huge impact on the airline industry, and this bill is aimed at addressing the significant [low] number of enplanements that COVID has caused and will continue to cause. I should say, our office is working on legislation to try to address the fact that we need better guidelines. Right now the airlines are at about 25% capacity but I believe that if we had better guidelines on a national basis, we could restore some of that airplane traffic to a higher level. And I think we should all work on that, Mr. Chairman, because I think that would help us reach a little higher capacity with the flying public, knowing what the guidelines and safety standards are.

The first nominee I want to discuss is Michael J. Walsh to be General Counsel of the U.S. Department of Commerce. I am disappointed that Mr. Walsh is even really on the mark-up today.

I thought the report by the Department of Commerce Inspector General was pretty damning of Mr. Walsh, showing that he was instrumental in the statements issued by NOAA questioning career weather forecasters information as it related to Hurricane Dorian.

Mr. Walsh did all of this while the Hurricane was threatening other areas of the United States. We need science to be the lead. We need science to be able to speak up, to be heard, and to keep us safe when it is important to be safe.

We have learned that Mr. Walsh was involved in efforts to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census, and that he may be involved in current other efforts to undermine hard count populations as it relates to Native Americans. Unfortunately, I feel like these are repeated activities, and I cannot support Mr. Walsh's nomination to be the General Counsel.

We are also considering Joel Szabat's nomination of Under Secretary of Transportation for Department of Transportation. He has served as the Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs and confirmed by the Senate in 2019. He has a long history in roles at DOT and various implementations of the CARES Act.

Mr. Michael O'Rielly to be a Member of the FCC Commission. He's served on the FCC Commission since 2013. In 2018, the U.S. Office of Special Counsel concluded that Mr. O'Reilly violated the Hatch Act for political comments made at a Conservative Political Action Conference event. In addition, Mr. O'Rielly has recently injected, I believe, politics into part of the spectrum issue, which I find disturbing.

And Ms. Mary A. Toman has been nominated to be Under Secretary of Commerce at the U.S. Department of Commerce will have a key role overseeing the Bureau of Economic Affairs and the Census Bureau. In follow-up questions from her confirmation hearing, Ms. Toman stated that she would respect the career work of the Bureau of Economic Affairs and Census employees, and I will certainly hold her to that commitment.

So again, Mr. Chairman, thank you for the various bills on today's docket.