

## U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

### Future of AI Forum

August 21, 2023

### Sen. Cantwell Remarks

[\[LIVESTREAM\]](#)

**Sen. Cantwell:** Thank you very much. Thank you for helping us, Nicole, [have] a great panel discussion and for the Allen Institute leadership. I want to thank Dr. Locascio for coming to the Pacific Northwest and her leadership at NIST, and for her leadership that we're going to hear about tomorrow on CHIPS & Science. So thank you so much.

Welcome to the AI forum. We're here because artificial intelligence, and things like quantum computing are game changers. They have the potential to help us solve pressing global challenges like climate change, hunger, poverty, disease, and are pivotal to our competitiveness for the future.

Like all technologies, AI brings lots of opportunities. There are some risks. But we need to realize that emerging technologies like AI and quantum are things that we must harness and make them work for us as a nation, that both our national security and competitiveness as a nation means that we need to be leaders in AI.

And today, we have some exciting technology that everyone gets to see when it comes to that leadership. We do need to ensure that government keeps pace with AI. And that is very important from the messaging and the leadership that was provided in 2017. We introduced -- I, with my colleague, Senator Young from Indiana -- legislation to say what should the government's strategy on AI be? We passed that legislation in 2020, and convened academia and experts to discuss what the role should be for the government sector in coordination with the private sector. So I'm very happy that that national advisory committee of experts, we have some representatives here today on the panel that will discuss their work on that committee, and what the United States government should be doing.

One of the priorities you're going to hear about was to provide more AI resources for academia and for small businesses. A second was to make sure that we were coming up with an international risk management strategy, and certainly to think about the impacts on workforce. So two members of this committee, Ashley Llorens, from Microsoft Research, and Swami Sivasubramanian from Amazon Web Services, both members of that national task force are here so they can talk about their work over the last several years in positioning us as a country on AI.

I believe the government must continue to partner with industry and academia, and that that public/private partnership is the right direction for us to keep going. One important partnership that has been driving that innovation, though, is the Allen Institute for AI. And we're so proud that they have been making incredible advancements in science, medicine, and conservation through AI. And that the Allen Institute for AI was the birthplace of the AI2 Incubator.

This incubator funds startups and early stage companies. And we can see many of them are here today. I'm so excited to see the AI applications in areas which I would just call precision agriculture. I know that WSU is here and to see some of their robotics; other companies like Laserweeder [Carbon Robotics] that we just saw over here -- amazing technology. When you think about all the AI applications in what I would call precision agriculture are just ways to drive efficiency and competitiveness for U.S. growers.

This is critically important in a changing climate environment where agriculture is becoming more challenging. And something as important as water AI can help our farmers know exactly how much water to use on every single acre. So it's very exciting to see the successes of those companies.

The healthcare applications that we've seen today, or something as basic as Metrolia -- their technology is just trying to help make our traffic systems more efficient and reduce traffic fatalities and help local governments who are already short handed, plan the right investments and move forward on them.

There are many, many more applications here today. And that is what is exciting about the whole advent of where we're going in AI. We do have to figure out a few guardrails. And I'm sure we'll talk about that today.

But I don't want the guardrails to limit the focus, because I want the focus to be on how do we continue that public private partnership to encourage more AI. But certainly, tomorrow, I will be speaking to the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, DARPA, and they will be talking about how to make sure that we don't have deep fakes and how we stop foreign adversaries from intentionally corrupting data sets and acquiring U.S. data that we don't want them to have.

And I'm sure that we will be talking about how AI can be used in discriminatory ways that we don't want to be allowed that would prevent somebody from getting a job or a loan, or potentially making them more targeted for other negative activities. And that's why I've introduced privacy legislation that would protect people from [those] kind of discriminatory practices. And I hope that we will get that legislation done.

And we also need to make sure that we're thinking about how any kind of emerging technology increases the transformation in training and education sectors. We need to have the workers better understand how they can use AI for their advantage in the workplace, but also we need to think more constructively about how our government works on these issues.

I always like to think about World War II where the women had to go in the factories and keep [up] U.S. production. That was a big transformation. Or the transformation when the guys came home from World War II, and everybody said, what's the economy of the future going to be? And we gave them the GI Bill, and they created it.

So now instead of a GI Bill, we need an AI education bill. We need a bill that says how do we educate for the future, given the impacts of AI? How do we offer the training and the skill set so people can adapt to now in their workplace? And how can we get the Department of Commerce and the Department of Labor to work together to transform the skill level of the workforce that we need for the Information Age and [the] AI revolution that's going to happen?

So I don't think Americans have ever shied away from innovation and we shouldn't today. So let's embrace the opportunities before us. And let's talk about what we need to do to make America critically successful in this technology and maintain our leadership.