



**Business Meeting: Opening Statement
Senator Lisa Murkowski
July 13, 2016**

Good morning, everyone. The Committee will come to order as we begin our business meeting.

Our Committee has worked extremely hard over the past 18 months. In January 2015, at the very beginning of the 114th Congress, it was this Committee that brought the Senate back to regular order through open and robust floor debate on the Keystone XL bill.

With strongly held views on both sides, that was not an easy issue to navigate. But our commitment to regular order, where everyone had an opportunity to debate, offer amendments, and then cast a vote, provided a way forward.

We also relied on regular order in the formation of the Energy Policy Modernization Act, conducting numerous oversight and legislative hearings, and three full days of business meetings. In April, the Senate voted overwhelmingly to advance our bill and just yesterday agreed to a formal conference with the House – the first such conference in well over a decade.

It is not easy passing a bill these days. I'm proud of the time and effort we've put into our legislation and am confident we will produce a conference report that can be signed into law this year.

Of course, our Committee has never stopped working on other priorities, even with all our efforts on the energy front. And that's why we're here today – to consider 43 territories and natural resource-related bills, including measures sponsored by ENR members such as Senators Gardner, Wyden, Risch, Franken, and King.

A total of 42 of these bills have been worked out by joint staff which will allow us to consider them by voice vote, with any members wishing to be recorded as 'no' allowed to do so as per our standard practice.

The single bill that will require a roll call vote this morning is S. 2902, Senator Flake's Water Supply and Planning Enhancement Act. Whoever noted that "whiskey's for drinking and water's for fighting" – many think it was Mark Twain – certainly had it right. Western water issues are always difficult because scarce water is vital for so many competing purposes.

The western states have been in a prolonged drought now for several years, making it even harder to reach a resolution. California, in particular, continues to grapple with its water issues as its congressional delegation searches for possible areas of agreement.

In Arizona, Senator Flake has been a leader on water issues. The bill he's put forward for our Committee to consider reflects a tremendous amount of work to build consensus on these issues in Arizona and other western states.

I know Senator Flake has made a number of modifications to his bill – including dropping a provision on Lake Mead that California and Colorado were concerned with – and I hope that will help it garner strong support.

As always, I welcome comments from members about their bills, either as we await a quorum or after we vote. Given our limited time this morning, we will move directly to votes once we have established a quorum, but I also intend to stay until all members wishing to speak are heard.

Thank you all for being here to help advance these important bills. I will now turn to Senator Cantwell for her opening remarks.

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