



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON
**ENERGY and
NATURAL RESOURCES**
LISA MURKOWSKI, Alaska, *Chairman*

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Bipartisan Agreement: Arctic Holds Strategic Value for United States
*Committee Considers Far North's Economic, Environmental,
Scientific Significance*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On a perfectly snowy day in Washington, DC, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., hosted a hearing on the economic and strategic opportunities in the Arctic as the United States prepares to assume the leadership of the international Arctic Council.



Click photo to play video of Sen. Murkowski's opening statement

“We are an Arctic nation because of Alaska, but truly the Arctic touches all 50 states and the development of the region must be a national priority. I’m doing my best to call more attention to that fact – and to the wide range of economic and strategic opportunities the Arctic offers, especially as it becomes more accessible,” **Sen. Murkowski** said.

Murkowski noted that the Arctic offers the United States strategic, economic, environmental, and scientific opportunities to advance its interests in the region. But the region also lacks basic infrastructure and offshore mapping – which need to be prioritized even at a time of fiscal constraint on the part of the federal government.

“The United States’ Arctic strategy is tremendously important to the economy in both Washington and Alaska, and to the United States,” **Sen. Cantwell** said. “We must make strategic

investments in Arctic science, which will help us understand the impacts of climate change on Arctic communities – but will also better inform our strategy for dealing with everything from rescue operations to potential oil spills.”



Click photo to play video of Ret. USCG Adm. Papp

Ret. U.S. Coast Guard Adm. Robert Papp, the State Department’s special representative for the Arctic, acknowledged that the United States has a lot of work to do developing the necessary infrastructure and navigational aids to support the increasing amount of activity in the Arctic, including committing new icebreakers to the region.



Click photo to play video of Mayor Brower

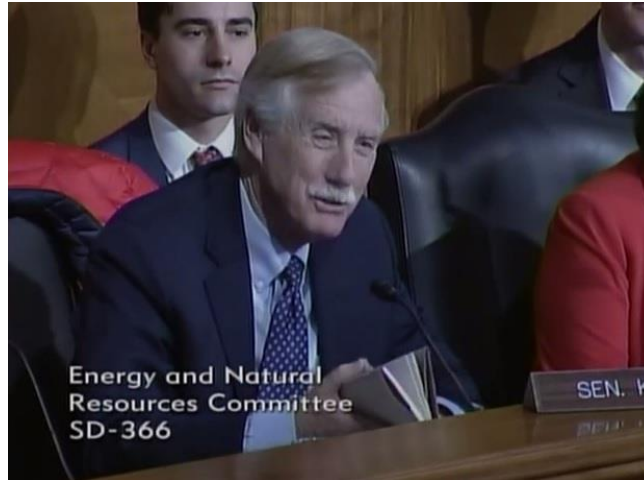
North Slope Borough Mayor Charlotte Brower, of Barrow, Alaska, urged committee members to listen to the people of the Arctic and ensure they have a say in how the region is developed. She also spoke of the importance of allowing local Alaskans to access the natural resources on their lands so that they could afford to invest in services and infrastructure.

“If we were to wait for the federal government and the state of Alaska to do our services, in the very harsh region we live in, we’d never get anything done,” **Mayor Brower** said.

Sen. Murkowski stressed the need for the federal government to share a portion of revenue from future oil and natural gas production in the federal waters off Alaska’s coast with the state and local communities. Doing so is a matter of fairness and would provide a means to support the development of adequate infrastructure, Murkowski said. *Video:* <http://bit.ly/1CCovc3>

The United States in April will begin a two-year chairmanship of the eight-nation Arctic Council, which presents an opportunity to demonstrate greater leadership on development of the region.

“Not since the Age of Exploration – when the search for the Northwest Passage motivated the exploration of both coasts of North America – has so much attention been focused on the Arctic,” **Sen. Murkowski** said. Alaska’s senior senator said she intends to draft legislation on Arctic infrastructure. *Video:* <http://bit.ly/1KsHgmr>



Click photo to play video of Sen. King

“As the climate changes and the Arctic continues to open, the strategic significance of the region will only grow more important, both for Maine and for the rest of United States,” said **Sen. Angus King**, I-Maine. “In essence, what we are seeing before our eyes is the revealing of a new and enormously important ocean resource with respect to energy, security, and commerce. That presents us not only with challenges, but also with opportunities to work collaboratively with nations in the region and to demonstrate how this kind of situation can be peacefully and thoughtfully developed. However, it’s going to take leadership and preparation on the part of the United States, which is why it was so critical to have this hearing today and to establish the Arctic Caucus with Sen. Murkowski.”

Sen. King also asked Adm. Papp about the maritime infrastructure needs in the Arctic. *Video:* <http://bit.ly/1aNf6T7>

Sens. Murkowski and King this week announced the formation of a [Senate Arctic Caucus](#) to raise awareness of the opportunities and challenges in infrastructure and facing the United States in the Arctic.

“We need to shake the notion that the Arctic is nothing but a snowglobe; something that can be watched, studied, and admired from afar,” **Sen. Murkowski** said. “A lot of people live there and have for thousands of years. We need to listen to them more – as Mayor Brower and the Alaska legislators who testified here today said – to ensure their economic security and future success.”

Archived video of the full hearing is available on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee [website](#).

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