

**Business Meeting to Report the Nomination of
Rep. Debra Haaland to be Secretary of the Interior**

Thursday, March 4, 2021

Opening Statement

- While I may not personally agree with some of her past statements and policy positions, as Secretary, she will be carrying out President Biden's agenda.
- At her hearing, she confirmed that she and the administration recognize that our country will remain dependent on fossil fuels for years to come, and a transition to a cleaner energy future must come through innovation, not elimination.
- She also affirmed her strong commitment to bipartisanship and the need to work across the aisle to find the bipartisan solutions needed to address the diverse needs of our country.
- I was deeply impressed by the strong endorsement she received by Congressman Don Young, for whom I have the utmost respect, and who has been in Congress long enough to be able to read people and know their heart and soul.

- He testified on the productive working relationship he has had with Representative Haaland and her willingness to work with him on important issues.
- That meant a lot to me and I hope it will also resonate with my colleagues on the Committee.
- The events of January 6th changed me, and I feel so incredibly strongly that in today's time, with the deepest divisions running through our country and the halls of Congress, we have to have people who have demonstrated they have the temperament to reach across the aisle.
- Finally, as a former Governor, I understand the importance of having one's own team in place.
- It is especially important that the President have the department heads he wants, since they make up his Cabinet.
- You won't find any mention of the Cabinet in the Constitution. The Framers did not provide for one.
- The Cabinet was George Washington's idea. It was his way of drawing on the diverse perspectives, experience,

and expertise of his department heads to inform his decisions.

- Washington chose people he could trust and who had experience, knowledge, and expertise different from his own. But he also chose them with a view to represent the different geographical and regional interests of the new nation.
- Washington wanted his Cabinet to encompass the regional diversity of the nation in order to bind together 13 separate states into one nation.
- President Biden faces a similar challenge. He is in perhaps the most difficult position a modern day President has been in, bringing us back from the brink after January 6th.
- He is trying to bind together a nation split by deep political, racial, social, and economic divisions.
- Just as I believe that the responsibility falls on every one of us to work together to heal those divisions, he is committed to ushering in a new era of bipartisanship and inclusiveness, and he deserves to have the support of Cabinet members he believes can best help him in that task.

- He is also trying to assemble a Cabinet that reflects the rich diversity of our nation—one that looks like America.
- 230 years after Washington called his first Cabinet meeting, it is long past time to give a Native American woman a seat at the Cabinet table.
- For these reasons, I support Deb Haaland’s nomination and will vote to report her and I look forward to working with her to protect our public lands and ensure the responsible use of all our natural resources in a bipartisan manner.