



**Opening Statement  
Nomination Hearing for Mark Menezes  
to be Deputy Secretary of Energy  
Chairman Lisa Murkowski  
May 20, 2020**

Good afternoon, everyone. The Committee will come to order.

This is our first hearing now since the onset of COVID-19 and clearly a very, very different world we are in. The pandemic has killed tens of thousands of Americans, infected more than 1.5 million, and affected every single one of us.

The Senate has necessarily been focused on aid, relief, and economic security over the past few months. But we also have core duties to fulfill, including the timely consideration of the President's nominees for the executive branch. That has grown in importance as we seek to ensure federal agencies are ready to help us recover from the pandemic.

Our hearing today is to consider the nomination of Mr. Mark Menezes to be the Deputy Secretary of Energy. I'd like to thank Mr. Menezes for appearing before the committee, and for the time you took to speak with me by phone last week.

As you can see, our format today is very, very different than any hearing that we have conducted, certainly during my time as Chairman. For starters, I am joining you from a small room at the Seattle airport, I'm en route back to Alaska. We've got other colleagues that are participating virtually. Those of you that are there in person are in a larger room, rather than our usual Energy hearing room. We do not have our normal in-person audience, we are streaming online.

We have previously provided guidance to how this hearing will be run to committee members and staff. But, I just want to briefly reiterate here:

- The committee room, again, has been configured to maintain the recommended six-foot social distancing recommended between Senators, the nominee, and other individuals who are needed to conduct the hearing. We've kept all in-person staffing to a minimum.
- For those of us joining remotely, once you start speaking, there will be a slight delay before you appear on screen, but that is normal and to be expected.
- To minimize background noise, we would ask that Senators who are using the video-conference option to click their mute button until it's their turn to ask questions.
- Departing from our normal 'early bird' rule, we will have questions from questions by order of committee seniority, alternating between Republican and Democratic members.

- If there is a technology issue, we will move on to the next Senator until it is resolved, and then return to the member who had difficulty.
- We ask that all Senators and the nominee adhere to the five-minute time limit. And for those Senators who are joining remotely, you will notice the screen labeled “Timer” that will show you how much time you have remaining.

At the conclusion of my statement, I will turn to Senator Manchin for his opening remarks. Senator Cassidy will then introduce our nominee and swear him in. After that, we will hear from Under Secretary Menezes for his testimony, and then begin member questions.

So, before I turn to Ranking Member Manchin, I want to reiterate that I appreciate Mr. Menezes appearing before the committee today. We thank him for his willingness to serve our nation in a new role at the Department of Energy.

As members will recall, the Senate confirmed Mr. Menezes to his current role, as Under Secretary for Energy, by voice vote in November of 2017. In that role, Mr. Menezes has been responsible for many programs that are key to fostering energy innovation, including nuclear energy, fossil energy, and energy efficiency and renewable energy. He helped create the Department’s cybersecurity office, which was carved out of the Office of Electricity.

That experience will serve Mr. Menezes well as Deputy Secretary. I know that he has the full confidence of Secretary Brouillette, who has already given you additional responsibilities at the Department while the Deputy position has been vacant. Having a full view of the Department’s capabilities will serve Mr. Menezes – as well as everyone else – as we seek to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our energy industry has been hit particularly hard by this crisis. Whether the oil supply shock that was compounded by the Russia-Saudi price war, lower electricity demand, or the lack of liquidity in the markets for new energy projects, we have seen significant economic and job losses in recent weeks.

The expertise at the Department and its seventeen National Laboratories will help us navigate new realities in the energy industry as our economy reopens, stabilizes, and begins to grow again.

It’s also important to note that the Department has been a key federal partner in addressing COVID-19, and uses its tremendous resources in the computing capacity of supercomputers at our labs for epidemiological research and virus modeling to identify possible treatments. DOE’s scientists and researchers are uniquely situated to tackle big challenges quickly and they have been hard at work since the onset of the pandemic.

Mr. Menezes, thank you again for the work you are doing at the Department, as well as your continued willingness to serve in this new role. We thank you for that, and with that I will turn to Senator Manchin comments and then we will turn to Senator Cassidy for the introduction and the Oath.

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