

Business Meeting
September 26, 2024

Opening Statement

- The Committee will come to order.
- Today we're here to consider over 70 pieces of legislation – a record for this Committee.
- Covering public lands, forestry, and water issues, these bills, along with the 50+ that we've already reported this Congress, will form the basis of our efforts to get another public lands package across the finish line before the end of the year.
- We also have three advanced computing bills covering AI, quantum computing, and cybersecurity.
- The United States must meet the moment in an age where China is pouring billions of dollars in science and technology research.
- I am particularly proud of my and Senator Murkowski's *DOE AI Act*.
-

- This bill which will leverage our world-class facilities at our national laboratories to undertake a comprehensive research and development program for Artificial Intelligence.
- We'll also be voting on several bills that we expect will carry a score, meaning they would effectively cost the Federal government money.
- I remain deeply concerned about our national debt, which exceeded \$35 trillion this summer for the first time in our country's history.
- That translates to \$104,000 for every man, woman, and child in America.
- If we do not do something soon, we will continue to make history for all the wrong reasons solely due to our fiscal irresponsibility.
- I can't in good conscience continue to add to that debt.
-

- So while these bills will be advancing through Committee today, I won't agree to them moving further without a pay for identified and attached.
- Before I turn it over to Senator Barrasso for his opening remarks, let me take a moment to recognize that today is our last business meeting of the Congress where all of our members will be here and so, potentially, the last time that I'll be sitting in this seat alongside all of you on the dais.
- I've proudly served on this committee since I became a Senator 14 years ago.
- And as my time comes to a close, there are a few observations that I'd like to share.
- This committee has maintained an enduring commitment to bipartisanship that has served us, and the country, well.
- In the last 6 years as both Ranking Member and Chairman, I've gotten a front row seat to that and felt the responsibility to continue it.

- That doesn't mean that we've always agreed, but rather that we know the meaning of compromise, and not letting the perfect be the enemy of the good.
- I'm very proud of that, and I hope that this Committee continues that commonsense tradition next year and beyond.
- That is the only way to make lasting, bipartisan policy, which we've successfully done time and time again.
- Since 2019 we've enacted over 350 pieces of legislation within our jurisdiction – laws that range in impact from global to national to hyperlocal.
- We started 2019 with the John Dingell Act, which was the largest bipartisan package of public land bills in over a decade. The centerpiece was the permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).
- We complimented that with the Great American Outdoors Act in 2020, which provided \$900 million in mandatory annual funding for the LWCF and

\$9.5 billion for the deferred maintenance backlog on our federal lands.

- We rounded out the 117th Congress with the Energy Act of 2020, the first update to our national energy policy in 13 years.
- In the 118th Congress we invested over \$110 billion in America's energy, western water, and public lands infrastructure needs in the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.
- We went on to enact the Chips and Science Act, which strengthened and invested in research at our National Labs.
- And while I'm sorry that the Inflation Reduction Act was ultimately done through the partisan reconciliation process, I am glad to see the strengthening of our energy security that has taken place as a direct result of that bill – from manufacturing investments being made across the country to onshore supply chains to increased energy production across the board.

- Finally, this Congress we've renewed 20 year compacts of free association with our strategic allies in the Pacific - Micronesia, Palau, and the Marshall Islands.
- And of course we reported a permitting bill that would benefit all types of energy and minerals with a robust committee process and strong bipartisan vote of 15-4.
- But those are just the highlights – there have been numerous other smaller packages and individual legislative accomplishments along the way.
- None of that would have been possible without my friends on both sides of the aisle, and specifically without the partnership of my good friends Senator Barrasso and Senator Murkowski, both of whom I've been honored to lead this committee with.
- I also want to acknowledge my committee staff, who have done the work behind the scenes all these years alongside their counterparts.

- Each piece of legislation takes hours upon hours of work that most people don't see to get ready for a hearing, business meetings like these, and then to negotiate through to enactment.
- We might be the conductors, but the staff are the engines around here, and I am grateful for their expertise and commitment.
- What we do here matters – the deliberative, collaborative, and bipartisan nature of this Committee's process is important.
- Thank you to all of my colleagues for your service and commitment to these issues.
- I look forward to seeing what the Energy and Natural Resources Committee is able to accomplish for the benefit of our great nation in the future.