

JUL 21 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski:

Enclosed you will find my responses to the written questions submitted following the July 20, 2017, hearing on my nomination to be Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas.

Please feel free to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Domenech", with a large, stylized initial "D" and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Douglas Domenech

Enclosure

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
July 20, 2017 Hearing: Pending Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Douglas W. Domenech**

Questions from Ranking Member Maria Cantwell

Question 1: Addressing the labor violations in the 1990's and 2000's that Jack Abramoff famously helped perpetuate took both local and federal action. What steps will you take on the federal level to prevent deplorable labor practices that are beginning to remind us of the Abramoff era?

Response: As I indicated at the hearing, given my nomination to this position I have not been directly involved in Insular Area policy decisions. While I would need to be briefed on this matter to understand the current extent of the problem, if confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas I will work with the governments of the territories to ensure that the appropriate laws are followed. I had the privilege of meeting with Congressman Sablan after my nomination, and he alerted me to the worker-visa issue. If confirmed, I look forward to working with him and the rest of Congress on this important issue.

Question 2: Are you aware of a Treasury Department investigation into the Best Sunshine casino activities?

Response: As I indicated at the hearing, given my nomination to this position I have not been directly involved in Insular Area policy. I am vaguely aware of a Treasury Department investigation into Best Sunshine casino activities, but have not been involved in the process.

Question 3: What will you do to ensure that money laundering will not be tolerated in the Northern Marianas, or any other Territory?

Response: As I indicated at the hearing, given my nomination to this position I have not been involved in insular area matters. While I would need to be briefed on this matter to understand the current extent of the problem, if confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas I will work with the governments of the territories and U.S. Federal agencies, as appropriate, to ensure that the appropriate laws are followed. Where necessary, I would also work with Congress on this issue.

Question 4: What will you do to ensure the Palau compact is implemented?

Response: If confirmed I will work with the Committee to ensure that the Administration meets its obligations with regard to the Palau compact. I understand that the President's FY 2018 budget request includes funding for the compact within the Department of Defense budget request and, as I said at the hearing, both the House and Senate have included funding in their respective defense authorization bills for next year.

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Question 5: What will you do to ensure the economy of the United States Virgin Islands does not destabilize?

Response: As I indicated at the hearing, given my nomination to this position I have not been involved in insular area matters and would need to be briefed on this matter to better understand it. I am aware, however, that the Department has recently provided a number of grants to the U.S. Virgin Islands through its Technical Assistance Program, including to develop a new Consumer Price Index that will provide data for use in assessing the economy and prospects for future growth and develop. I also had the privilege of meeting with Congresswoman Plaskett prior to my hearing to get her perspective. We discussed multiple issues including permanently extending the Rum Cover-Over, infrastructure needs and National Park Service. I look forward to working with her, the Governor, and Congress to continue supporting these efforts.

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Questions from Senator Bernard Sanders

Question 1: President Trump has suggested in the past that climate change is a hoax. Is the President correct? Is climate change a hoax?

Response: As I indicated at the hearing, the climate is changing and man has an influence.

Question 2: Do you agree with the vast majority of scientists that climate change is real, it is caused by human activity, and that we must aggressively transition away from fossil fuels toward energy efficiency and sustainable energy like wind, solar, and geothermal?

Response: As I indicated at the hearing, the climate is changing and man has an influence. I the territories – especially lower lying islands and atolls - are uniquely impacted by sea level rise.

Question 3: Do you agree with the vast majority of scientists that the combustion of fossil fuels contributes to climate change?

Response: Yes

Question 4: Do you believe that DOI has a role in reducing the extraction and use of fossil fuels?

Response: I am not aware that Congress has ever provided that direction to the Department of the Interior. I believe in the responsible development of our nation's natural resources as well as the renewable energy sources to fulfill the Secretary's goal of establishing American energy independence.

Question 5: If confirmed, how will you work to address climate change?

Response: As I stated in the hearing, I will pursue the best available science to make informed management decisions on the behalf of the Department and the Insular Areas.

Question 6: Which improvements to the management of federal public lands do you hope to achieve, if confirmed?

Response: Secretary Zinke has made the maintenance backlog one of his top priorities. I will work with him, Members of Congress and our Insular Area constituents in a cooperative manner to address these issues.

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Question 7: The Department of the Interior is the most important federal government agency for dealing with the issues that affect Native American tribes. The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs “assists and supports the Secretary of the Interior in fulfilling the United States’ trust responsibility to the federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages and individual Indian trust beneficiaries, as well as in maintaining the Federal-Tribal government-to-government relationship.” If confirmed, will you commit to an open door policy for tribal leaders to ensure that the federal government upholds its trust responsibility and maintains its government-to-government relationship with tribal leaders?

Response: I have been nominated for Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas, which is separate from the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs position you cited. However, I do share Secretary Zinke’s belief that tribal consultation is vital and if confirmed will continue to hold that position.

Question 8: DOI’s eight regional Climate Science Centers (CSC) cover the continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii, and U.S. Affiliated Pacific Islands. Each CSC is based out of a host university in their region and most are comprised of multi-institution consortia, which include university and non-university partners. In 2016, the work of the centers included assessments of warming on river flow, working with tribes to assess management strategies, and developing tools for decision-making. If confirmed, will you support the CSCs? If so, how?

Response: As stated before, I will always pursue the best available science to make informed management decisions on the behalf of the Department and the Insular Areas.

Question 9: Do you promise to uphold the merit system principles set forth in Chapter 23 Title 5 U.S. Code, which prohibit factors other than merit from consideration in civil service employment decisions?

Response: I support the merit system principles.

Question 10: The Holman Rule allows any member of Congress to propose amending an appropriations bill to single out a government employee or cut a specific program. If confirmed, do you commit to opposing any acts of Congress to individually target DOI employees based on political whims?

Response: Congress sets its rules. If confirmed, it will be my responsibility to follow the law and advise the Secretary on any proposal that affects the Insular Areas, and I will do so.

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Questions from Senator Debbie Stabenow

Questions: I understand you previously worked for the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a think tank that depreciates climate change as simply, “justification for onerous climate policies that will limit or eliminate the use of fossil fuels.”

As Assistant Secretary of Insular Affairs you will be responsible for carrying out federal policy for, and administering federal assistance to, U.S. territories - many of which are especially vulnerable to the earliest and worst impacts of climate change due to their geographical location, concentration of infrastructure along coastlines, and dependence on unique and fragile ecosystems.

In your opinion, how severe of a problem is climate change? What is the role of the federal government in addressing the current and future impacts of climate change?

Response: As I indicated at the hearing, the climate is changing and man has an influence and I will pursue the best available science to make informed management decisions on the behalf of the Department and the Insular Areas. As I also mentioned in my hearing, throughout my time as Secretary of Natural Resources for the Commonwealth of Virginia, I worked hard to deal with shoreline erosion issues on Tangier Island in the Chesapeake Bay. If confirmed, I will apply the same pragmatic, solutions-driven approach with the Insular Areas.

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Question from Senator Steve Daines

Question: Do you see the position of Assistant Secretary of Insular Affairs as playing a prominent role in the economic growth, security, and well-being of the U.S. territories?

Response: Yes

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Questions from Senator Catherine Cortez Masto

Question 1: Do you believe in sound science determining policy?

Response: Yes

Question 2: Do you believe the government should adequately invest in the programs that make a difference in lives of the communities in my state and across the country?

Response: Yes

Question 3: What more can DOI do for our communities?

Response: Secretary Zinke has made it a priority for the Department to be a good neighbor. If confirmed, I look forward to partnering with the Insular Areas Congressional delegation, Governors and constituents to craft real solutions that will last.

Question 4: What do you think should be budgetary priorities for your office/Department?

Response: Secretary Zinke has made the maintenance backlog one of his top priorities and the President's budget request included funding to fulfill our compact obligations in the Pacific. After meeting with each of the Congressional members from the territories, they echoed the same message. If confirmed I will work with Secretary Zinke, the Administration, Members of Congress and our Insular Area constituents in a cooperative manner to address the most pressing issues facing our territories.

Question 5: Why do you believe you are qualified for the position you are nominated for?

Response: I have a true passion for the Territories and have extensive experience that will serve the Insular Areas well. During my time in the Bush Administration, I was asked by then Secretary Dirk Kempthorne to serve as his appointee to the Advisory Council for the Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico and later as the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas. That appointment gave me the opportunity to work on issues and travel to Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the Mariana Islands. These visits afforded me the occasion to work on health care capacity issues, foreign worker policy, invasive species concerns, and the unique challenges of affordable energy on the islands. After my service with the Bush Administration, I was honored to be selected and confirmed as Virginia's Secretary of Natural Resources. In that role I oversaw six state environmental, recreation, and historic resource agencies and worked with the Governor to improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay, achieve the best year on record for clean air, build oyster and blue crab populations, and reintroduce elk to southwest Virginia. We invested in land conservation and worked with Virginia's 11 state recognized Indian tribes to permanently protect historically significant Werowocomoco, the village of

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Indian Chief Powhatan. In addition, I worked hard to combat shoreline erosion on Tangier Island. I was able to share these on-the-ground experiences with each of the Governors and Congressional Delegates from the territories and was honored to receive endorsements from each of the territories.

Question 6: If Secretary Zinke reassigns functions in some of your offices/departments and moves forward with decentralizing the Washington, DC office to regional offices, what do you believe should be reassigned to regional offices?

Response: I share Secretary Zinke's priority of making sure the Department gets the right tools and resources out to the field. If confirmed, I look forward to making sure we implement this vision in the territories.

Question 7: What do you believe should remain as a priority in your office?

Response: If confirmed, we must seek to fulfill our compact obligations, serve our Insular Area constituents in a collaborative manner and craft real solutions to challenges before our territories.

Question 8: Your agency, like so many others within the federal government, have dealt with continued shortfalls in budgetary funding, which has hurt our government's ability to partner effectively with private industry and have inflicted negative impacts on our nation's parks, forests and wildlife conservation programs. Do you believe more funding would allow the Interior Department to be a better partner to industry and the taxpayer?

Response: I support the goals and mission of the President's budget. I know that sufficient resources are needed to carry out any public function. I also know that resources are limited and the money alone cannot solve any problem. I believe that decisions with public dollars must be fully informed and made very carefully with the objective of maximizing efficiencies with those resources. However, the budget request is part of process that requires collaboration with Congress. Should I be confirmed, I commit to working with Secretary Zinke, the Administration, and the Congress to facilitate appropriate funding for our Insular Areas that is consistent with the President's budget and priorities and the intent of Congress.