

Opening Statement
Chairman Lisa A. Murkowski
Business Meeting on the “Keystone XL Pipeline Approval Act”
January 8, 2015

Good morning, the Committee will come to order. It is good to be together for the first meeting of this new Congress. I welcome our new members to the committee. It is great to see such good attendance, and it nice to have a packed house. My prediction for this new year is that energy will be a subject, an issue, an area that will draw great attention. It not only is important here in this Congress, but it is important to our nation’s economy and security, and the issues that we will take up in this committee are issues that will be front and center moving forward.

I am pleased that we got an opportunity today to talk about energy in a broad perspective, but recognizing that we have members that have other issues in front of them, other committees that they’ll go to – I want to give a brief outline of what we will do this morning. I would like to lay a little bit of the groundwork here for the way this committee will proceed in this Congress, giving the committee members my perspective, my focus. Obviously, this is a business meeting taking up the Keystone XL Pipeline, so we need to process that. There have been a couple of amendments presented by members. I want to make sure that we have an opportunity to get through the business portion of this meeting, but I also want to make clear to each of you that I want to extend the courtesy to you to make your statements, your comments, not only about the Keystone pipeline legislation before us, but the committee itself and perhaps your intersects with that. I would like you to know that this is not just an opportunity for me as a chairman to have the microphone, and my partner, the ranking member Senator Cantwell, but you as well.

With that said, I am extremely honored to be the second Chairman Murkowski for this standing committee. It is quite an honor and privilege to me. I have been a member of

this committee since I came to the Senate. It has been my number one priority – when you come from a producing state like Alaska, that’s understandable – but it has also been an extraordinary opportunity to come to embrace all aspects of the energy sector. Whether it be how we deal with nuclear waste disposal issues, how we move to a more efficient energy system, how we work to build our energy infrastructure and our grid security, how we deal with cyber security... there is so much that is included within this energy sector. And it isn’t just natural resources that we deal with. It is the other aspect of our portfolio within this committee that sometimes people forget. The public lands piece is huge. Especially for those of us in the west. The territories – we have the Senator from Hawaii who has joined us and I welcome her, but I also recognize that as someone from the other noncontiguous states sometimes our territories get overlooked. This committee has jurisdiction over them and we will not forget that.

I do again thank you for the opportunity to help correct our energy agenda for these next couple of years. And I look forward to working with Senator Cantwell. To have somebody who is our geographic neighbor with so much shared interest between Washington and Alaska, we have a lot that we can be working on collaboratively. I had a very strong collaborative relationship with my friend and colleague from Oregon when Senator Wyden was chairing the committee, and I think we set a good tone for this committee in terms of how we build things, and how we work to advance initiatives throughout the process.

Having said that, as we embark on our first business meeting, it is a little unfortunate that we moved to markup first. We didn’t have the opportunity for the hearing that was scheduled for yesterday. We had already invited our agreed-upon witnesses and circulated a background memo written by joint staff in preparation for that hearing. Indeed, we had already received testimony from our witnesses – the Association of Oil

Pipe Lines; the Center for American Progress; and the Laborers' International Union of North America – which I'd like to submit for the record now.

We are here today to consider and report to the full Senate an original bill to approve the Keystone XL pipeline. The text of this bill is identical to the original bill reported by this Committee last year on a bipartisan vote, which fell one vote short on the Senate floor. It's fair to say that the world is watching to see whether the United States is ready to lead as a global energy superpower, which I think we recognize we have become. WE certainly are viewed as such in the eyes of many outside this country. An energy superpower that respects its neighbors, trades with its allies, and builds necessary infrastructure such as pipelines. I believe Congress is ready to send that signal in a bipartisan manner. I believe the American people are ready. It is unfortunate that the Administration continues to stand in the way, even threatening to veto this important legislation. I don't think that that threat should deter us as a committee, as a Senate, and really, as a Congress.

The long-delayed Keystone XL project is far from the only energy-related issue demanding our attention. There is another oil pipeline in Alaska that is already built – an 800 mile pipeline that has been around for about 40 years – and is surrounded by billions of barrels of untapped oil on federal lands and waters. Because the federal government refuses to allow new production, however, its throughput has declined dramatically. We're less than half-full in that trans-Alaska pipeline. That is costing us jobs, it threatens our state's budget, and even prompted the *New York Times* to write about the “economic anxiety” afflicting Alaskans. It's not just Alaskans thinking we've got some troubling issues – it's being recognized by others as well.

Alaska is obviously my priority – but it is not all we will consider here. Having said that, I'm going to be working very hard with each of you to remind you all that we are

an Arctic nation *because* of Alaska. What that means to you, whether you're in Maine, and I welcome my friend and colleague Senator King and his interests in Arctic issues, and our ranking member Senator Cantwell also has a keen interest on how we're going to build out our Arctic interests.

Our committee will devote much of January and February to hearings on a wide variety of issues. One thing to expect next week is a notice for a legislative hearing, to be held before the end of the month, on Senator Barrasso's bipartisan LNG export legislation. Other potential topics for hearings include electric grid innovation, nuclear waste policy, OCS development and revenue-sharing, the Administration's Quadrennial Energy Review, critical minerals, and oversight. We will also hold budget hearings, to consider the President's request, and return to the practice of having the Secretaries of Energy and the Interior regularly appear before this panel.

I've been asked as I've wandered through the hallways these past few days, what are my priorities. I don't think it's a secret to those of you on the committee here that my *Energy 20/20* book is not out of date yet. It outlines much of my philosophy, and it's pretty simple: energy is good. It is vital to our prosperity and a strategic asset that we can use to assist our allies. I believe it is in our interest to continue making our energy abundant, affordable, clean, diverse and secure. There's no acronym there, but it's arranged alphabetically so you can remember it easier. And I am confident we can make progress toward those goals by further strengthening supply, modernizing infrastructure, supporting efficiency, and ensuring federal accountability.

Those four areas of focus – supply, infrastructure, efficiency, and accountability – will form the basis of an energy bill that our committee will consider. To that end, I will be sitting down with each member of the committee to understand your priorities for legislation, both within those four categories and within this committee's jurisdiction.

Based largely upon that feedback, I will assemble Chairman's marks for each of the four titles. Those will then be the subject of legislative hearings and subsequently considered, amended, and voted on by our committee. I'm hopeful that we'll be able to expend good focus and energy in these months ahead so that towards the end of the spring we're prepared to actually move on a product.

This is an aggressive but achievable schedule. As we move ahead with it, I am optimistic that we will find considerable common ground, at least as a starting point. There will be some ideas that lack unanimous support, but that is why we engage in negotiation, conduct votes, and carry out all of the other institutional functions expected of us as a legislative body.

And, of course, we will multi-task. And I'll note for the record that it is two women who are leading this committee, and I won't say that women are better at multi-tasking than men... but most women I know are better at multi-tasking than men! Our jurisdiction consists of more than energy and minerals. We have water, forestry, grazing, hunting, territories, and other issues before us, as well. Each of those requires a great deal of attention and in many cases legislative action will be warranted.

For example, forest management reform was left on the table in the last Congress and we must get back to work on it. There is bipartisan agreement that we must improve the management of our forests. That includes getting the timber harvest up to get a handle on the wildfire problem, protect our water supplies, and sustain our rural economies. Although there may be a need for some place-based solutions, it is my view that we need nation-wide forestry reform legislation.

The Secure Rural Schools program was not extended in the last Congress, so communities and schools dependent on that support are watching closely. We need to do right by them and develop responsible fixes over the near- and long-term.

Finally, I would be remiss after our work on the Defense Authorization bill to leave out National Park reform. The Park Service observes its centennial anniversary next year – and there is a proud history to celebrate – but it is also an agency struggling with multiple systemic issues. We should send Parks reform legislation to the President during this Congress.

Throughout all of this, I intend to uphold the long-standing reputation of this committee as a place where serious work is done in a collaborative manner. Ranking Member Senator Cantwell and I agree that there are good opportunities for us to be engaging in productive work product that will make a difference for the long term. And I want to ensure that each of you feels that you have shared weight and responsibility as we address the energy issues for our country and our nation.

I can promise you that I will never have as long an opening statement as I have just given this morning. But I felt it was important to lay out some of where I believe the committee is headed in the next couple of years.

As such, I am pleased to recognize Senator Cantwell for her comments.

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