

**CHAIRMAN JOE MANCHIN'S OPENING STATEMENT
FOR HEARING ON REP. HAALAND'S NOMINATION
TO BE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR**

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

- The Committee will come to order.
- The Committee meets today to consider the nomination of Representative Debra Haaland to be the Secretary of the Interior.
- Welcome to the Committee, Representative Haaland. Thank you for being here this morning and for your willingness to serve in this important position.
- Before we proceed with the nomination, I would also like to welcome four new members to the Committee.
- Although this is not the Committee's first hearing this Congress, it is the first one since the Senate appointed new members to the Committee.
- On the Democratic side, we are pleased to welcome Senator Kelly of Arizona and Senator Hickenlooper of Colorado.
- On the Republican side, we are pleased to welcome Senator Lankford of Oklahoma and Senator Marshall of Kansas.
- The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources has a long

and distinguished history of producing bipartisan legislation to ensure our energy security and the wise stewardship of our natural resources.

- We look forward to working with all four of our new members in carrying on this tradition of bipartisan cooperation.
- Nearly 130 years ago, the Supreme Court described the Secretary of the Interior as “the guardian of the people of the United States over the public lands.”
- But the Court’s description barely scratches the surface of the broad scope of the Secretary’s responsibilities.
- The Secretary is responsible for managing more than—
 - 480 million surface acres—nearly one-fifth of the land area of the United States;
 - 700 million acres of subsurface minerals; and
 - 2.5 billion acres of the Outer Continental Shelf.
- These lands include—
 - over 400 national parks,
 - over 100 national monuments, and
 - over 500 national wildlife refuges,
 - along with nearly 500 dams and over 300

reservoirs that supply water to 31 million people and irrigate 10 million acres of farmland.

- In addition, the lands managed by the Secretary produce nearly 20 percent of the nation's energy that is critical for our energy independence, including—
 - 12 percent of our natural gas;
 - 24 percent of our oil;
 - 43 percent of our coal;
 - Half of our geothermal energy; and
 - Much of our wind, solar, and hydropower.
- Those public lands also—
 - generate \$12 billion for the Federal Treasury,
 - support 1.8 million jobs, and
 - contribute an estimated \$315 billion to the U.S. economy.
- The Secretary also maintains government-to-government relations with 574 Indian tribes, holds in trust 56 million acres of Indian trust lands, and provides educational services to tens of thousands of Native American students in 23 states.
- In addition, the Secretary is responsible for—

- reclaiming thousands of abandoned coal mine sites,
 - paying health benefits to miners,
 - overseeing one of our nation’s premier scientific agencies—the Geological Survey—and
 - protecting thousands of endangered and threatened species from extinction.
- Finally, the Secretary oversees 70,000 employees in the Department of the Interior and an annual budget of over \$21 billion.
 - It truly is an enormous and important job, and it is critical that the Secretary be ready to take on the management of the Department and have a deep understanding of the many issues under her purview.
 - President Biden, in nominating Representative Haaland for this critical role, expressed his confidence that she is up to the task, and that she will be “a true steward of our national parks, our natural resources, and all of our lands.”
 - Representative Haaland currently represents the first congressional district of New Mexico in the House.
 - She serves as the Vice Chair of the House Committee on

Natural Resources, and as the Chair of its Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands.

- As a former Governor, I have always believed that a President should be given wide latitude in the selection of his cabinet.
- But I also take the Senate's constitutional obligation to advise and consent to the President's nominations seriously.
- Like many of my colleagues, I look forward to hearing from Representative Haaland today, and getting to know more about her views and the policies and programs she will pursue if confirmed to this important position.
- I will now recognize Senator Barrasso to make his opening statement.