

MACGREGOR AND DANLY NOMINATIONS

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

TO

CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF KATHARINE MACGREGOR TO BE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR AND JAMES DANLY TO BE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF ENERGY

APRIL 2, 2025



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MACGREGOR AND DANLY NOMINATIONS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2025

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m. in Room SD-366, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Mike Lee, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE LEE, U.S. SENATOR FROM UTAH

The CHAIRMAN. The Committee will come to order.

Welcome to the Committee's third nomination hearing for this Congress, and this is an important one. This is a hearing involving two people who will help run the two departments that this Committee oversees. We will receive testimony from these two distinguished nominees for the offices of these two Deputy Secretary appointments, the Department of the Interior and the Department of Energy.

Each of these nominees has previously been confirmed by the Senate after having been reported favorably out of this Committee. Each served honorably in their respective offices. The two individuals are, therefore, no strangers to this Committee—Katharine MacGregor, nominated to be the Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior, and James Danly, nominated to be Deputy Secretary of Energy. Both nominees deserve to be confirmed, and each has my strong support. I thank President Trump for sending these nominees to the Senate for confirmation. In both the Department of the Interior and the Department of Energy, the Deputy Secretary functions as sort of the chief operating officer, responsible for a lot of the day-to-day management and function of each of these departments, departments that involve a complex, sprawling series of agencies that directly affect the lives of 330 million Americans.

At Interior, the Deputy Secretary helps oversee nearly 70,000 employees, a \$14 billion budget, and it manages 500 million acres—a staggering one-fifth of our nation's land, and it is roughly two-thirds of the sprawling 28 percent of the total landmass owned by the U.S. Government throughout our country. So this role requires supervising the development of all sorts of things and managing this entity. It involves being the largest supplier and manager of water in 17 states, of upholding trust responsibilities to 574 federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Natives. Ms. MacGregor has done this work before, and she has done well

in this position. In her previous tenure as Deputy Secretary, she oversaw efforts to ensure responsible domestic energy and mineral development on public lands and waters, reduced permitting time frames, and implemented the Department's COVID-19 operational response. She brings a wealth of private sector and public sector experience, including her most recent role at NextEra Energy, giving her a broad perspective on energy development, environmental protection, and regulatory reform.

At the Department of Energy, the Deputy Secretary plays a similarly critical role. That Department is tasked with maintaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent, reducing the threat of nuclear proliferation, overseeing the United States energy supply, carrying out the environmental cleanup from the Cold War nuclear mission, and managing 17 national laboratories. The Department literally keeps the lights on. We have seen Mr. Danly's work at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, both as General Counsel and later as Chairman and as a Commissioner, of course. We have read his dissents, his statements, and his warnings, particularly about the dangers of distorting markets and overreliance on intermittent sources of electric power. His legal and regulatory record demonstrates a consistent commitment to statutory interpretation grounded in the text of the law and a deep understanding of the grid's physical and economic realities. Beyond his professional credentials, Mr. Danly brings a record of service and sacrifice. As a former Army officer, he served two tours in Iraq and was awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart.

I look forward to hearing from both nominees today. Their roles are vital, their responsibilities immense, and the decisions that they make in these jobs will reverberate throughout the American West, and of course, the nation at large.

With that, I now recognize Senator Heinrich for his opening statement.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MARTIN HEINRICH,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW MEXICO**

Senator HEINRICH. Thank you, Chairman, and welcome Ms. MacGregor and Mr. Danly.

Before we get to Committee business, I do want to address the troubling reports that DOE is considering canceling or renegotiating existing funding contracts with companies, some of which are already under construction. As I wrote to Secretary Wright in a letter a week ago, I will remind Mr. Danly and Ms. MacGregor today, the decision to rescind these awards rests with Congress, not with the President and certainly not with the Elon Musk. However, even before these so-called kill lists were leaked, we already started seeing the economic impact of the Administration's reckless actions. It is estimated that more than 50,000 energy jobs have already been lost under Trump's watch. The Administration's actions are also constricting the fastest growing and most affordable power sources, just as demand from manufacturing and data center growth is surging. This means that energy costs will soar. Electricity prices are already on track to be the highest they have been since the 1990s, and terminating projects in the name of energy dominance is not only ludicrous, it will lead to higher energy costs directly for

households. All of this is only the newest phase in the Administration's campaign of chaos in federal agencies and actions that are raising energy costs.

Both the Interior and Energy Departments have been subject to whiplash in just the last two months. From illegally firing thousands of employees, only to be required by courts to rehire them, to announcements that agency buildings would be closed or sold, or maybe not, to freezing grant funds and canceling contracts in contravention of federal law only to see some unfrozen while others still remain inexplicably frozen. This has got to be about the least efficient way to run a government. For the Department of the Interior, all of this mismanagement has real on-the-ground impacts for people and communities. We have seen closed visitor centers and overflowing trash cans at parks, field offices that have shorter hours, and it is harder for people to reach front-line staff when they have questions. Small businesses are worried if their permits will get processed. Scientists are struggling to cover expenses because the Federal Government has backed out of contracts with them. Our public lands are the birthright of every single American; however, if something doesn't change, and soon, at the agencies that care for these public lands, we could lose that birthright.

I have a number of questions today for both of these nominees for the Energy and the Interior Departments. Both Departments were created by statute. They were not created by the whim of the President. They do not exist at the President's pleasure. The laws they execute, the programs they administer, the funds they spend, were enacted, created, and appropriated by law by Congress. I will be looking for assurances from both nominees that they are committed to following the law. And I hope to hear how they will get these Departments returned back to a path of public service, back on track securing American leadership and competitiveness, and the responsible stewardship of our natural resources.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay, let's now turn to our witnesses for their testimonies. Before your opening testimony, I would like to swear you both in. If you would both stand.

Do you swear that the testimony that you are about to give to the Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

[Witnesses sworn in]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

All right, we will now have opening statements. We will hear first from Ms. MacGregor and then from Mr. Danly. And while you are speaking feel free to introduce any family that you have here with you.

You may proceed, Ms. MacGregor.

STATEMENT OF HON. KATHARINE MACGREGOR, NOMINATED TO BE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Ms. MACGREGOR. Thank you, Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and members of the Committee. I thought I had escaped DC, but as you all know, sometimes life presents you with different paths, and I am both honored and humbled that President Trump

has once again nominated me for the position of Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

As a true hockey family, we have packed the proverbial stands this morning, and I am blessed to be joined by my family and friends, including representatives of the 2004 University of Pennsylvania varsity women's crew team, members of the best women's hunting group this side of the Mississippi, my best Alaskan fishing and baking buddy, my favorite astronaut, and several individuals who have been amazing mentors to me in my professional career. Finally, and most importantly, I am joined by my parents, Jean and Peter MacGregor, my aunt and uncle, Sheila and Dick Sanford, and my brother Robert and his wife Michele. The three of us are the MacGregor hockey line on the Congressional hockey team.

When I testified here over five years ago, I explained my focus to achieve balance in managing America's public lands, cultural treasures, and natural resources in order to advance the priorities of our President. I understand the deep personal connections that so many people have to the lands and resources managed by Interior. But in my work in Congress and at Interior, I also learned firsthand how the decisions we make in Washington impact American families and businesses far away from DC, sometimes for generations. I remember Senator King telling me a story about traveling with his grandchildren in an RV to visit some of our nation's parks, and it makes me smile because I absolutely remember picnics with my grandparents and cousins at Valley Forge National Park in Pennsylvania. These are the happy memories that make us smile even long after our loved ones have passed.

But I also remember the tough stories of resource management plan delays impeding economic development in rural America or a woman denied justice simply because law enforcement could not reach her due to weather, and of course there was no road. For the last four years, I have been one of those people watching DC from afar, all while falling in love with Florida. From the dangerous beauty of the Everglades and the invasive species issues we face, the importance of being prepared for natural disasters like hurricanes and wildfires, the incredible abundance of our offshore waters, the thrilling call of an Osceola turkey as you watch the world wake up from inside a hunting blind, or even just the stunning red-orange glow of Jupiter Lighthouse at sunset, which is managed by the BLM. But more importantly, in my time in the private sector, I have learned a lot. I have worked on environmental permitting and compliance for almost every type of energy infrastructure project around our great nation and have grown to appreciate the far-reaching consequences of decisions made in Washington, the durability of those decisions, and the timeliness of agency action.

As we all know, if there is a federal nexus, there is a federal official somewhere saying yes or no, or in the worst case, just not responding. What I have concluded from outside of DC is that the American people, your constituents, deserve better. I cannot imagine any instance where it's just and right that someone wait over 30 years for the authority to build a road to connect their community to better services, over 20 years for a habitat conservation plan, 15 years for a final resource management plan, or over a dec-

ade for a pastor in rural Arkansas to be able to continue to bury his deceased parishioners in their 100-year-old churchyard only because the land appraisal for a Congressionally authorized land exchange sat on someone's desk. It is simply unacceptable, and frankly, it breaks my heart. This is why so many rural Americans feel like their government has forgotten them.

Don't get me wrong, I have heard really great stories too. I was so proud to learn that several of the cold case offices that we established under President Trump's initiative to address Missing and Murdered Native American and Alaska Native women and children had solved several cases after many years. Many of you on the dais helped us with this initiative. Sadly, these little victories seem too infrequent. We need to turn that around. Roads not built, cases left unsolved, appraisal backlogs, and obstacles to public hunting and fishing, these are the reasons I would like to return to Interior. I would like to come back to drive change and efficiency. And in doing so, I hope we can once again make a difference for the people who rely upon us to show up and do our jobs. I am honored to have met with many of you and learn about the many missions at Interior that are important to you, personally, and to your constituents. If confirmed, I will always keep the needs of the American people at the forefront of my mind. After all, it is they who are ultimately watching us here in DC and they are hoping for us to work together, consider their needs, and frankly, get things done in Washington.

Thank you again for having me here today. I would be more than happy to take any questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. MacGregor follows:]

Statement of Katharine MacGregor
Nominee for the Position of Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior
Before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
April 2, 2025

Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and Members of the Committee, I thought I had escaped Washington, DC, but as you all know, sometimes life presents you with different paths - and I am both honored and humbled that President Trump has once again nominated me for the position of Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

As a true hockey family, we have packed the proverbial stands this morning - and I am blessed to be joined by many family and friends, including: representatives of the 2004 University of Pennsylvania varsity women's crew team, members of the best women's hunting group this side of the Mississippi, my best Alaskan fishing and baking buddy, my favorite astronaut, and several individuals who have been amazing mentors to me in my professional career. Finally, and most importantly, I am joined by my parents, Jean and Peter MacGregor, my aunt and uncle - Sheila and Dick Sanford, and my brother Robert and his wife Michele.

When I testified here over 5 years ago, I explained my focus to achieve a balance in managing America's public lands, cultural treasures, and natural resources in order to advance the priorities of our President. I understand the deep personal connections that so many people have to the lands and resources managed by Interior. But in my work in Congress and at Interior, I also learned firsthand how the decisions we make in Washington impact American families and businesses far away from DC, sometimes for generations.

I remember Senator King telling me a story about traveling with his grandchildren in an RV to visit some of our nation's parks - and it makes me smile because I absolutely remember picnics with my grandparents and cousins at Valley Forge National Park in Pennsylvania - these are the happy memories that make us smile even long after our loved ones have passed.

But I also remember the tough stories of resource management plan delays impeding economic development opportunities in rural America, or a woman denied justice simply because law enforcement couldn't reach her due to weather, and of course there was no road.

For the last four years, I've been one of those people watching DC from afar - while falling in love with Florida. From the dangerous beauty of the Everglades and the invasive species issues we face, the importance of being prepared for natural disasters like hurricanes and wildfires, the incredible abundance of our offshore waters, the thrilling call of an Osceola turkey as you watch

the world wake up from inside a hunting blind, or even just the stunning red/orange glow of Jupiter Lighthouse at sunset (which is managed by the BLM).

But more importantly, in my time in the private sector, I have learned a lot. I have worked on environmental permitting and compliance for almost every type of energy infrastructure project around our great nation and have grown to appreciate the far-reaching consequences of decisions made in Washington, the durability of those decisions, and the timeliness of agency action.

And - as we all know - if there's a federal nexus, there's a federal official somewhere saying yes or no. Or in the worst case - just not responding.

What I have concluded from outside of DC is that the American people, your constituents, deserve better.

I cannot imagine any instance where it is just and right that someone wait over 30 years for the authority to build a road to connect their community to better services, 20 years for a habitat conservation plan, 15 years for a final resource management plan, or over a decade for a pastor in rural Arkansas to simply continue to bury his deceased parishioners in their 100-year old church yard - only because the land appraisal for a Congressionally-authorized land exchange sat on someone's desk. It is simply unacceptable and frankly it breaks my heart.

This is why so many rural Americans feel like their government has forgotten them.

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Roads not built, cases left still unsolved, appraisal backlogs, obstacles to public hunting and fishing opportunities - these are the reasons I would like to return to Interior. I would like to come back to drive change and efficiency - and in doing so, I hope we can once again make a difference for the people who rely upon us to show up and do our jobs.

I am honored to have met with many of you and learn about the many missions at Interior that are important to you and your constituents. If confirmed, I will always keep at the forefront of my mind the needs of the American people. After all, it is they who are ultimately watching and hoping for us to work together, consider their needs, and frankly get things done in Washington.

Thank you again for having me here today and I would be more than happy to take questions.

Senator COTTON [presiding]. Thank you, Ms. MacGregor.
Mr. Danly.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES DANLY, NOMINATED TO BE
DEPUTY SECRETARY OF ENERGY**

Mr. DANLY. Thank you, Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and members of the Committee. It is an honor to appear before you again today. I sit before you, humbly, as President Trump's nominee for Deputy Secretary of the Department of Energy.

Before I get to my comments, I just want to recognize my family and friends. Behind me sits my wife, Frankie. The last time I appeared before the Committee, just like this time, my son, James, who is an active, talkative, rambunctious 10-year-old, is not in attendance, but he is watching the hearing, I am told, as it is happening. For both Frankie and James, I want to recognize the sacrifices that families of the people who serve in public service make. Those sacrifices are profound. So thank you both, Frankie and James, for your support and indulgence over the years that I have been in government and when I was in the Army, especially when I was in Iraq. I also have friends here, including colleagues from throughout my career, among them the lawyers who first taught me energy law, and my advisors from my time at the Commission.

As the Committee is aware, the Department of Energy performs a number of critical functions. The national labs ensure that the United States is and remains at the cutting edge of science and technology. The Department is responsible for auditing and overseeing the weapons stockpile, it manages environmental cleanup at legacy waste sites, and it promotes the development and deployment of energy sources and infrastructure. I believe that my prior roles as general counsel, commissioner, and chairman at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission give me a unique and important vantage point on how to achieve the President and the Secretary's shared vision of ensuring affordable, reliable, and secure energy for the American people.

The utility and natural gas sectors, the subjects I regulated while at FERC, are a critical component to achieving those goals. Right now, we face profound challenges. Demand for energy is growing and we cannot face the difficulty in producing and delivering it to Americans to ensure the country's safety and prosperity without tackling a number of very difficult problems. There are also great opportunities. America is blessed with the most abundant energy in the world, we have the best technical minds to harness that potential, and we have a private sector that stands ready to invest capital, build infrastructure, and produce the energy that we desperately need. We stand on the brink of an energy renaissance in which we can replace growing energy scarcity—at home and abroad—with energy abundance for the United States and its allies, improving the lives of our citizens while ensuring our geostrategic position.

There are a couple of subjects that I would just like to touch on before I finish.

First, our energy problems and scarcity are driven, in large measure, by failure to develop needed infrastructure. America

struggles to build things these days. We have an acute need to build all manner of infrastructure across the country, but the federal permitting regime has become an impediment to that development. Interminable delays, legal challenges that threaten the permits that are already issued, and a continuously changing regulatory landscape have come to chill investment. And the result of that is that projects take longer to build and are increasingly expensive, or worse than that, they never get built in the first place. It will be difficult to achieve our goals of ensuring affordable, reliable, and secure energy to the American people without tackling the problem of federal permitting.

Second, and relatedly, we have an acute need for electric generation. The United States is experiencing unprecedented demand for electricity. And that demand is increasing at an accelerating rate. Data centers, AI, and reindustrialization have brought load onto the system at a speed that we have never been seen before. Maintaining our strategic position in the world absolutely requires that Americans have access to affordable, reliable, and secure energy in abundance. I have spent the better part of a decade directly regulating the energy markets and the reliability of the bulk electric system. I can report that we have systematically failed to compensate baseload generation in order to ensure the retention of existing assets and to incentivize the arrival of the new generators that we need to meet the growing demand. This challenge has to be solved.

Third and finally, we need to recommit ourselves to America's preeminence as the world's leader in science and technology. The national labs, which are the crown jewel of the Department, have been the source of countless advances over the years, both in pure and applied science. These advances and discoveries have driven commercial development, spawned new industries, and ensured American prosperity. Recently, the national labs have made advances in quantum computing, nuclear reactors, and fundamental scientific research that promise a new era of science and engineering. We have to recommit to that mission to ensure that America continues to maintain its scientific and technological edge that the citizens of the United States have relied upon for so many decades.

Again, Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Danly follows:]

Testimony of James P. Danly
before the
United States Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
April 2, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich and members of the Committee. It is a pleasure to appear before this committee once again.

I am deeply honored to sit before you today as President Trump's nominee for Deputy Secretary at the U.S. Department of Energy.

Before I begin, I would like to recognize my family and friends in attendance. Behind me sits my wife, Frankie. Like the last time I appeared before this committee, our son, James is not in attendance because he is an active—and talkative—boy. For both Frankie and James, I want to recognize the sacrifices that the families of those in public service make—they are profound. Thank you for your support and indulgence over the years that I have served in government and the Army, especially when I was in Iraq. I also have friends here, including colleagues from throughout my career, among them the lawyers who first taught me energy law, and my advisors from my time at FERC.

As the Committee is aware, the Department of Energy performs a number of critical functions: the National Labs ensure that the United States is, and remains, at the cutting edge of science and technology, the Department is responsible for the nation's weapons stockpile, it manages environmental clean-up at legacy waste sites, and it promotes the development and deployment of energy sources and infrastructure.

I believe my prior roles as general counsel, commissioner, and chairman at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission give me a unique and important vantage point on how to achieve the President and the Secretary's shared vision of ensuring affordable, reliable and secure energy for the American people. The utility and natural gas industries, the subjects I regulated while at FERC, are a critical component to achieving those goals.

No doubt, we face profound challenges. Demand for energy is growing and we come to face difficulty in producing and delivering it to ensuring America's prosperity and safety. There are also great opportunities. America is blessed with the most abundant energy in the world, the best technical minds to harness that potential, and a private sector that stands ready to invest the capital, build the infrastructure, and produce the energy we desperately need. We stand on the brink of an energy renaissance in which we can replace growing energy scarcity—at home and abroad—with energy abundance for the United States and its allies, improving the lives of our citizens while ensuring our geostrategic position.

There are specific areas of interest I would like to briefly focus on.

First, it has become increasingly hard to build things in the United States. We face an acute need to build all kinds of infrastructure throughout the country, but the Federal permitting regime has become nothing short of an impediment to that development. Interminable delays, legal challenges that threaten federal permits once obtained, and an ever-changing regulatory landscape had come to chill investment. The result? Infrastructure projects take longer to build and are increasingly expensive or—worse—never get developed in the first place. It will be difficult to achieve our goals of ensuring affordable, reliable, and secure energy to the American people without tackling the problem of federal permitting.

Second, we face an acute need for more electric generation. The United States is experiencing unprecedented demand for electricity. And that demand is increasing at an ever-accelerating pace. Data centers, AI, and reindustrialization have brought load onto the system at a rate that has never been seen before, and it shows no signs of slowing. Meeting this demand is not optional. Maintaining our strategic position in the world requires that American have access to affordable, reliable, and secure energy in abundance. I have spent the better part of a decade regulating the energy markets and the reliability of the bulk electric system. I can report that we have systematically failed to sufficiently compensate baseload generation that we can ensure the retention of needed existing generators let alone enough to incentivize the development of new, dispatchable resources in the quantities needed to meet this growing demand. This challenge must be solved

Third, we need to recommit ourselves to America's preeminence as the world's leader in science and technology. The National Labs, which are the crown jewel of the Department of Energy, have been the source of countless advances in science, both pure and applied, that have driven commercial development, spawned entire industries, and ensured American prosperity. More recently, the National Labs have provided advances in quantum computing, nuclear reactors, and fundamental scientific research that promise a new era of science and engineering. We have to recommit to that mission to ensure that America continues maintains the scientific and technological edge that we and our citizens have relied upon for so many years.

Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and members of the Committee: thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to your questions.

Senator COTTON. Thank you, Mr. Danly.

I agree with all of what you said in your opening statement on the topics that most Americans will think about when they think about the Department of Energy—things like infrastructure and permitting reform and electricity power generation. I want to focus, though, on the last thing you mentioned there, the national labs, which overlaps with my work as Chairman of the Intelligence Committee. I think a lot of Americans probably don't appreciate that the Department of Energy is in charge of all these national labs that do exquisite research and do nuclear energy or quantum computing, artificial intelligence, and other things. I think they'd be shocked to know that last year 40,000 foreigners visited these national labs, and fully one-fifth of those—8,000—were from Russia and China. It doesn't seem to me like the smartest step to be letting Russian and Chinese scientists into our national labs.

What do you think, Mr. Danly?

Mr. DANLY. Of course, Senator, I completely agree with that. And when you say that we are visited, we don't just mean passing through, we mean actually conducting science in close proximity to the scientists that are already working at the labs. The national labs are fundamental, not just to the research and science I mentioned a second ago, but they also have national security missions. And when I first learned about the number of adversarial nations' scientists that are at the national labs, I was so surprised by it that I thought at first I didn't hear correctly. It was shocking, the number. And it's not just a matter of losing the scientific and technical edge I talked about, it's also a matter of grave national security interests that has to be looked at and, if necessary, dealt with.

Senator COTTON. I think most Americans would be shocked to know that one of every five foreign scientists visiting our national labs were from China and Russia. And also, though not in as large numbers, they come from places like Iran and Cuba and North Korea as well. Do you know how many American scientists get to go to Russia and China's equivalent of national labs?

Mr. DANLY. None.

Senator COTTON. The answer would be zero. That does not seem to me to be reciprocal, to use a term that the President likes. That's why, on the Intelligence Committee, for years, it has been a matter of bipartisan concern that our national labs seem to allow these scientists, and they almost seem to compete to bring them in, because the decisions are made at the lab level, not at the level of what you might call the headquarters element of the Department of Energy, drawing on your own intelligence unit and the intelligence community more broadly. I have legislation to address this problem. I bet a lot of the problem, though, can be addressed by you and the Secretary.

So can I get your commitment, Mr. Danly, that you will take a look at the legislation, you will see what needs to be done to address this threat, and do as much as you can with your existing authorities, once confirmed?

Mr. DANLY. Absolutely. If I should be lucky enough to be confirmed, I will work with you to deal with this problem.

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

The second topic I want to address, again, something that a lot of Americans probably don't think about when they think about the Department of Energy, is the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), but it's about half of the Department's budget. They do a lot of very important work for our nuclear weapons arsenal, a lot of research, a lot of production. One thing in particular that they do is the production of plutonium pits for nuclear weapons. We have had a challenge with this for years. We were supposed to get to the point where we produce 80 new plutonium pits by 2030. Under the Biden Administration, that slipped to 2035. Can I get your commitment that you will advocate for NNSA to get all the budgetary resources it needs to perform its vital mission?

Mr. DANLY. The NNSA is one of the fundamental elements of American national security. The weapons stockpile is the ultimate instrumentality of sovereignty for the United States. And I commit to doing everything I can to ensure, should I be confirmed, that NNSA's mission is discharged fully.

Senator COTTON. And specifically, trying to get back to 80 pits—what they need to do in New Mexico and South Carolina facilities?

Mr. DANLY. So I am not certain, because I am not at the Department of Energy, what the necessity is regarding the rate or level of pit production, but it is fundamental to our weapons stockpile, and I absolutely commit to doing everything I can to ensure that the duties are discharged.

Senator COTTON. Okay, thank you.

Senator Heinrich.

Senator HEINRICH. Thank you.

Ms. MacGregor, I want to start with you. During your time, both on the transition team or since you've been nominated to be Deputy Secretary, have you engaged in any discussions about proposed sales of public land with either Department of Interior or transition team personnel?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Senator, while I did gladly serve on the transition team as a volunteer, in my personal capacity, I did sign an NDA related to that work. However, I can tell you, currently, and in my current position, no, I did not engage in conversations regarding sales of public lands.

Senator HEINRICH. If confirmed, can you commit that any public land disposals will fully comply with existing federal laws, like the Federal Land Policy Management Act and the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Sir, absolutely. I fully intend, if confirmed, to obey the law.

Senator HEINRICH. That brings me to a related question, which is, the Department is currently failing to disburse grant funding that a federal judge has ruled must be disbursed. If you are confirmed, will you work to ensure that the Department follows federal court orders?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Sir, I am not familiar with that particular case. However, I know in our discussions in your office, we got into several of those subjects, and I know they are very important to you. And absolutely, I will commit to working with you on that.

Senator HEINRICH. The Great American Outdoors Act is a very positive example of how this Committee, and Congress as a whole,

worked in a very bipartisan fashion, with President Trump and with previous Secretaries of Interior, to provide permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and that has had an impressive impact on states across the West, particularly in protecting and expanding hunting and fishing access—something I know that you are very passionate about—and wildlife habitat.

Can we count on you to continue to carry out this law and support this conservation legacy that this Committee and President Trump established in 2020?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Sir, I am overjoyed for you to highlight one of the issues that you worked with President Trump on, and absolutely, we would love to work with you on further implementation of that Act.

Senator HEINRICH. Mr. Danly, I want to start with an easy one for you. How do you feel about visiting Sandia and Los Alamos National Labs?

Mr. DANLY. As we talked about in your office, sir, I cannot wait for the opportunity. I love the national labs.

Senator HEINRICH. That's the right answer.

[Laughter.]

Senator HEINRICH. You mentioned permitting reform, and I was really glad to hear you bring that up, because I think it was one of the high-water marks on this Committee in the previous Congress, but it's not something that we have gotten all the way to the President's desk. It is not something that we have been able to get through both houses of Congress in the same Congress. What are your thoughts on the product that this Committee produced in the previous Congress and the importance—I would say even necessity—of coming together around a permitting reform package to accomplish some of the goals that you articulated.

Mr. DANLY. So Senator, I truly appreciate the effort that the Committee went through before in trying to streamline and speed up permitting. Just the briefest glance at my separate statements at the Commission shows how important this is throughout the time that I was at FERC. I don't actually know the specific bills, because there were a bunch of different ones that were moving around, and we who are not in Congress have difficulty tracking everything that is happening. But there were elements of several of the iterations that I thought were very promising. And just as I have always said before to the Committee, any help anybody wants with thoughts from me on permitting reform, I am happy to assist.

Senator HEINRICH. I have to pick and choose here because I am running short on time.

Ms. MacGregor, while you were at the Department of the Interior, the number of forest acres treated for wildfire resilience by the BLM saw some modest increases. However, from 2021 to 2023, the BLM treated nearly 50 percent more acres for wildfire, and that wasn't by accident. It was because this Committee funded them. In particular, in both the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, it created funding streams to be able to deal with forest resilience and prepare to make sure that wildfires are not catastrophic when they do occur.

Can you commit to continuing to implement the Infrastructure bill and the IRA programs that are focused strictly on wildfire risk reduction?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Sir, I was alluding to that conversation earlier, but I absolutely can commit to working with you on everything related to forest management. I know it's extremely important to so many on this Committee. It is really important to a lot of humans living in the wildland fire interface, and it was absolutely a priority of President Trump the last time.

Senator HEINRICH. Thank you.

Senator COTTON. Senator Justice.

Senator JUSTICE. Thank you.

Well, let me lead off by just saying this, you know, whether it be any of you, any on the other side of the aisle, anybody on our side—anybody—there is nobody here that loves hunting and fishing, our public lands all across this unbelievable country, you know, there is no one here that worships wildlife habitat more than I. Nobody. And with all that being said, I have got to just put out a plea more than anything. I want all of us to realize the magnitude of the problem that is right on our doorstep. That's all there is to it, right on our doorstep. You know, as far as forestry management, I am all in—100 percent. On and on and on and on and on, but the problem that is facing us today, and we better listen to this white-haired guy from West Virginia, and it's just this: we have an energy problem that is astronomical and it's going to be so, so important, and so big, that we best better get at trying to do something with all that is in us to address this situation because it's coming not like a freight train, it's coming, like Mr. Danly said to me on the phone, it's coming like bigger than absolutely the demand of World War II, bigger than any time in our history.

And absolutely, Ms. MacGregor and Mr. Danly, we appreciate so much, and you are going to do great. You are absolutely going to be confirmed. Absolutely, I am all in. But with that, I would say to everyone, okay, it's time to step up. What are we going to do? What are we going to do? A year and a half from today, our grid and the demand—we cannot handle it. We can't handle it. I don't care what you say, you are going to have an electricity meltdown in this country, and it's coming, and you are going to have to make a decision. America, you are going to have to make this decision and this is all there is to it.

We are either going to stick and say, well, we are going to protect our homes or we are going to protect energy and our job opportunities. What are you going to do? Because you can't do them both. There is no way. There is no way. Whether it be that side of the aisle, this side of the aisle, any of you all, these nominees absolutely, if we don't do something now, right now. You talk about up—Creek, now you're there. You're there, America. And absolutely, if you don't watch out, what will happen is just this—we will have to defer to people of the world that are not our allies, but they are our adversaries. We are going to have to say, okay, you have the leg up. You have the leg up, not America. That's what is going to happen, and it's going to happen soon. So all of us, you know, our national labs, we are protecting with all in us. We do everything we possibly can, but we have got to get at the absolute

issue at hand, and that is just this, we absolutely, there is no way that if we don't get moving, and get moving really quickly, that we are not going to have a colossal problem.

And the last thing I would add is just this: you know, I am from little old West Virginia, but little old West Virginia, along the way, has gotten it right on energy over and over and over. And little old West Virginia, along the way, stepped up when we had to have them really step up—really, really step up. You know, whether it be these terrible world wars that we had or whatever it may be. We have always stepped up, and we do know a lot about what we are talking about, about energy.

So I congratulate both of you. I really don't have a question for either one of you. Absolutely, I know your testimony is rock solid. I have talked with both of you. I absolutely believe in both of you and I just congratulate you on being here. And I would say, for God's sakes-a-livin', let's go. Let's go. We have got to do something. Let's go.

Thank you all for being here.

Senator COTTON. Thank you, Senator Justice, I also agree you should always listen to white-haired men from West Virginia, especially this white-haired man from West Virginia, because I could have given your same remarks, just not as eloquently as you did.

Senator WYDEN.

Senator WYDEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I have questions for both of you. I am going to begin with you, Mr. Danly. I believe you know that I am the author of the technology-neutral clean energy tax credits, and they have worked out so well in the private sector, that 21 House Republicans are making it very clear they want them to stick around. They have said it very explicitly. Now, your role in this—people don't much know this—is pretty important here because you guys have the science and Treasury has got the taxes. So we have got to get you guys in sync, and that is why I need to start with asking you, for the record, do you believe that the IRA tax credits have brought more private-sector investment into the energy space?

Mr. DANLY. Thank you for the question, Senator.

And of course, you and I spoke about this when I visited you in your office. Do I believe that it brought more investment? I can't be certain about that—

Senator WYDEN. The reason I am asking is, 21 House Republicans think that it sure as hell has.

Mr. DANLY. I understand that, but it is impossible to run the counterfactual to know what investment would have occurred had those tax credits not been there. Certainly, the tax credits had an effect on the capital markets. They always do. Every tax regime has a tendency to bias us or favor one use of capital over another, as we discussed.

Senator WYDEN. Now, as a kind of economic proposition, more choices, like the Clean Energy Tax Credits, mean more competition and the opportunity to hold down costs and prices. Do you share that view?

Mr. DANLY. The details of any particular incentive regime matter to that answer, and I am not certain—

Senator WYDEN. But the economic theory.

Mr. DANLY. No, no, but if we were to take that to its logical extension, that would mean a 100 percent taxation rate and a 100 percent incentive rate would yield the best possible outcome, and of course, that's not true. So actually getting the levels of incentive right to achieve the objective that Congress has, which, of course, is Congress's authority, that is an Article I function. I don't quibble with any of that. I just don't know what the counterfactual would be for investment.

Senator WYDEN. What I am going to do is, I am going to hold the record open to give you some examples where it's clear that can help lower prices. More choices, more competition. We'll go back and forth on examples because I think I've got more of them than you do.

Thank you.

Mr. DANLY. Thank you.

Senator WYDEN. Let me go to you, Ms. MacGregor. I appreciated our visit. I didn't get a chance to talk about one forestry issue that I feel very strongly about, and that is doing more prescribed burns, because we have to get out there and get serious about this granular material and all the stuff that we hear from the experts. Senator Manchin and a group of us, on a bipartisan basis, worked on this. We made a start, but I am of the view that we have to dramatically increase the focus of the Federal Government.

And you'd be in a position to do something about it. We need to increase this because, in our part of the world, if we don't get out there in the cold weather months, which is one of the reasons these cutbacks have been so harmful—we do our best prescribed burn work when it's cold. And you can get in there, and you can get both sides—labor and business and environmentalists—and you can really make big strides. But now, we have reduced the number of people we got, and that hurt us when we have had some cold weather, when we could have been out there, and we have got you here who can tell us that yes, I want everybody to know on a bipartisan basis, I am serious about prescribed burns making a bigger difference in terms of fighting these infernos that we have today. And in our part of the world, they are not fires. They are not your grandfather's fires. They are infernos. And we need this prescribed burn.

Your thoughts?

Ms. MACGREGOR. First, Senator, I just wanted to thank you for spending time with me. I loved our conversation and I also enjoyed your thoughts on grazing as well and how that can be used as a management tool. And I know that that is something that has been important on this Committee. How about you and I go out with a drip torch and get to work?

Senator WYDEN. I'm going to quit while I'm ahead.

[Laughter.]

Senator WYDEN. I thank my colleagues, and there is tremendous interest on a bipartisan basis in this prescribed burn issue. The question is the urgency of it. Everybody's got their laundry list. In our part of the world, we are 3,000 miles from Washington, DC. We want people to be actually hearing us, and it sounds like you are open to further discussions. I appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman [presiding]. Thank you very much. And I appreciate your patience with me. I have multiple committee assignments that are pulling me in three different directions. I may have to leave later for another committee hearing, but bear with us on that.

Ms. MacGregor, I would like to start with you.

The nationwide housing shortage is something that some states are experiencing more than others. We experience it to a particularly acute degree in the West, and in my home State of Utah, where the Federal Government owns two-thirds of the land. And that severely restricts the housing supply. Now, there is a law in the books, the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, that authorizes the Department of the Interior to lease or convey federal land for public purposes. Under the law, a public purpose is defined as "for the purpose of providing facilities or services for the benefit of the public in connection with, but not limited to, public health, safety, or welfare."

In your view, could housing be considered a public purpose for purposes of Recreation and Public Purposes Act?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Sir, I think it could.

The CHAIRMAN. And in the event that it couldn't, recognizing that some might see it differently, or to address any ambiguity, I have introduced legislation called the HOUSES Act, which follows the template of the Recreation and Public Purposes Act to independently allow for that.

Now, I was pleased to see recently that there was this announced partnership between the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of the Interior to address housing affordability in the West. Any idea what actions the Department of the Interior could take to help tackle the housing crisis?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Well, sir, I first want to say that we would love to work with you on that endeavor, and I know that for technical assistance, we offer it to every member of the Committee when it comes to drafting legislative ideas that are creative. And I know housing has been a big issue, not just in the West, but throughout our country. And I recall, you know, working on this in the first Trump Administration with particular attention to Park Service employees because housing for Park Service employees tends to be one of the greatest obstacles to get that workforce out into these very rural, or sometimes difficult, or maybe more expensive areas so that we can have the workforce we need to keep our parks open.

But when it comes to some of the opportunities there, I think, you know, the R&PP Act has some issues with it. For instance, the reversionary clauses can be difficult and tie up potential home ownership with the full transference of land. I think when people think about owning a home, they believe it belongs to them and that the land is theirs, not that it could be pulled back by the Federal Government or by a township based upon not fulfilling the needs of the Act and its original statutory form.

The CHAIRMAN. Right.

Ms. MACGREGOR. So I think working on that, working on environmental reviews and efficiency will actually help make better use of that Act.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, no, I think that is right and it's one of the reasons why in the HOUSES Act we deal with that by leaving a short reversionary interest for a period of 15 years just to make sure that it remains in use as single family housing during that duration. Once that 15-year period has elapsed, the reversionary interest goes away.

Mr. Danly, let's turn to you for a moment. President Trump seeks to attack and limit the waste, fraud, and abuse occurring within the U.S. Government, in the government spending, you know, \$7.2, \$7.3 trillion a year, the crumbs that fall from that table are going to be pretty large, and it leaves room for people to make mistakes along the way. But some of those mistakes end up being very big and very costly. Recently, a number of projects, grants, and contracts that were mandated by law, such as the laws like the Infrastructure Investment in Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, have been exposed as problematic in one way or another—unnecessary, duplicative, or otherwise an issue. For example, the Department of Energy recently canceled a \$247 million contract for appliance standards.

If confirmed, how will you commit to working with Congress to make sure that DOE is not frivolously spending taxpayer dollars or spending taxpayer dollars on unnecessary, duplicative, or wasteful projects?

Mr. DANLY. Thank you, Senator Lee.

Every government agency head and all of their subordinate officers are required to stop waste, fraud, and abuse wherever it is found. Every contract that the government signs and every set of funds that the government commits has to be done in accordance with the law and in accordance to the preconditions established by the agency's regulations, and the terms of the contract have to be honored. This is everything from the basic predicate requirements for the contract to the milestones and conditions. President Trump has outlined a very bold vision for reducing waste in Federal Government spending, and I am absolutely dedicated to the same purpose. It is the only way to properly steward the taxpayers' money, and government should constantly be on the lookout for ways to find greater efficiencies.

The CHAIRMAN. And strictly speaking, outside the context of its own branch, neither the legislative branch nor the judicial branch is typically a contracting agency. In other words, contracts may be entered into within the legislative branch for the legislative branch, or within the judicial branch, likewise for the judiciary. But typically, for the government, generally, contract decisions overseeing the performance of a contract, entering into the contract, signing the contract, even in some circumstances, anticipatorily repudiating a contract for reasons deemed necessary and appropriate by the executive—those are executive decisions, not legislative or judicial ones, typically. Is that right?

Mr. DANLY. Of course it is. And not only does every branch have their own obligations, the executive branch spending—I don't know what the percentage is—but 99.99 percent of the money in contracts from the government has, obviously, a much weightier duty to ensure that those dollars are spent properly and, you know, there are efficiencies, not just in the way that government conducts

its business through contracting, but in the ways that the contracts are awarded and in the types of solicitations that the government undertakes. It is a fundamental problem, and there is a huge amount of money that is spent that doesn't need to be.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator King, you are up next.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. MacGregor, one of my principal concerns as the Ranking Member—we call ourselves Co-Chairs—with Steve Daines on the National Parks Subcommittee, is staffing at the national parks. Ten or fifteen years ago—well, let me just put it in perspective: In the last 15 years, staffing at the national parks has fallen by 15 percent, not counting the cuts that have been made in the last couple of months. Visitation at the national parks has gone up 15 percent. So we already had a staffing problem. So my request to you is stop cutting people at the national parks and start hiring them because the parks are a gem of America. People visit them. They expect them to be maintained. They expect them to be open. They expect to be able to not have to wait in long lines in order to get into a park.

So can you commit to me that we are going to stop cutting in the national parks and we are going to start to rebuild that very valuable staff?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Sir, so many members of this Committee raised that issue because I think they and we understand how important it is to keep those parks open, especially for tourism and economic dollars that are flowing into your communities. So I absolutely will commit to you on making sure that we work to have the appropriate staffing levels to keep those parks open and get as many people as possible into them.

Senator KING. Well, I would hope that the appropriate staffing levels would be somewhat higher than they are today given the fact that we already have a 30 percent gap in what's happened, forgetting about the recent cuts. So this is essential and I think it would be a great disservice to the American people to compromise the availability of our national parks.

The second thing on national parks is maintenance. As you and I discussed, the Great American Outdoors Act, I think, was one of the signal achievements of the first Trump Administration, which had a big piece of money for deferred maintenance. The problem is, we are still deferring maintenance, and I fought all the way up to the Office of Management and Budget in the prior Administration to try to get the maintenance budget increased. It's a false economy to not make repairs. They are only going to have to be done in the future and they are going to cost more.

Will you work with us and work with the Congress to increase the maintenance budget at the national parks? It's not very exciting, but it's something we have to do.

Ms. MACGREGOR. Sir, coming from the private sector, I understand the importance of O&M dollars on an annualized basis, but I will say this—it is interesting, and there is a lot to dig in on, on the implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act. I find that—we talked about how, you know, we worked to advance this amazing legislation, and now the maintenance backlog has some-

how gone up. We have a lot of work to do together on this, and I absolutely commit to working with you on it.

Senator KING. Well, one way to keep it from going up is to quit digging the hole, and that's what we are doing right now.

Mr. Danly, I agree with you about permitting reform. I was one of the supporters of the bill here. I am hoping we are going to be able to bring that bill back to life and perhaps improve it. I assume you agree that part of the permitting reform has to be transmission, because we are all talking about increasing electricity. The electricity has to get somewhere, and transmission is one of real serious bottlenecks right now in sort of reinventing our electric system. Do you agree?

Mr. DANLY. So to date, the real problems with federal permitting haven't been seen in transmission because other than the backstop siting authority—

Senator KING. Are you serious about that, because we have some transmission projects in the West that have been pending for 20 years?

Mr. DANLY. So for the most part, other than when you have federal land crossings, which do, of course, occur in the West far more than they do in the East, but the places where we have the greatest sets of constraints—the highest congestion costs—are in the East more than the West. This is typically—obviously, there are examples where that's not true. Most siting and permitting happens at the state level for transmission. There is only—for transmission lines, generally, there is the backstop siting authority that was re-enacted again.

Senator KING. Right.

Mr. DANLY. But, of course, transmission has to be part of the solution—or part of the discussion—because as the demand grows and we have to have a more robust transmission system, both to meet NERC reliability standards and simply to get real power to its destination, we are going to have to increase transmission lines all over the country.

Senator KING. And that has to be part of the solution.

Quickly—research. You talked about research. One of the things that disturbs me that's going on now in the Administration is cutting research money all over the place—the Department of Health and Human Services, even research on Alzheimer's, which I absolutely don't understand. The Department of Energy is one of the leading research parts of our government, and I think you mentioned basic research being important that's not immediately commercially valuable so it's not going to be done in the private sector. Fracking was invented under Department of Energy research grants back in the 80s. And do you agree that we have to maintain the research budgets, not only at the national labs, but in places like NREL and the other work that the Department of Energy is doing in research on energy development, generally?

Mr. DANLY. Yes. The Congress has charged the Department of Energy with conducting this research. As I mentioned in my opening statement, the number of advances we have had has changed America's commercial outlook and has created new industries. And the money spent on basic research whether—I mean, the national

labs found quarks. These are things that are not commercially viable on their own, but if improved, the sense of the world—

Senator KING. I, myself, wouldn't know a quark if I fell over one, but I understand.

Mr. DANLY. Nevertheless, they are important.

Senator KING. Yes, sir.

Mr. DANLY. Yes, I absolutely agree with you that this research is important and is central to the function of the Department of Energy.

Senator KING. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hope we can have a second round because I have a few more questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Hyde-Smith.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I certainly welcome you both here, excited that you are back, very excited about your nominations, and I want to associate myself with the remarks of Senator Justice. I think you are going to do a fantastic job, and thank you for your willingness to do this.

And I want to start with Ms. MacGregor. I sure enjoyed our visit, and we talked about the Vicksburg National Military Park in Mississippi and the Natchez Historical Park sites that are in Natchez, Mississippi, and I certainly would love your commitment on helping reach our goals there. We are looking at several things—a visitor center—but Mississippi's number one tourist destination is the Military Park, and we are very, very proud of that.

One of the other things is the offshore oil and gas exploration and production in the Gulf of America. It is crucial to both the President's energy agenda and to the economies of the Gulf states. Revenue from lease sales supports our states and funds mandatory programs such as the Land and Water and Conservation Fund, and mandatory lease sales in the Gulf would further boost this revenue. And I support Senator Cassidy's bill to mandate two offshore oil and gas lease sales per year for the next 10 years and look forward to working with him and this Committee to advance that legislation. And where I am from, so many of our residents there have employment there. We know what fossil fuels do and they have really, really been in dire need in the last few years.

But do you consider continued offshore oil and gas development vital to our nation's security and economy? And will you support our efforts to mandate lease sales, especially if the Department works on the new five-year leasing plan?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Senator, thank you for the question, and I truly enjoyed—I love our visits together. Absolutely, I can commit to you with working on that legislation. I know that the Gulf of America has been one of the largest energy producing provinces in our country for decades and the innovations that come out of that offshore province have been exported throughout the world, but ultimately that was created and innovated here in the United States. And I would like to see that province produce long into the future. As the statute requires, we need to make those resources available for national need, and I think the American people would like to see their prices come down in energy. So I absolutely will work with you and the Senators on various solutions for that.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. And the invitation certainly stands open for the Military Park. I would love to host you there.

Ms. MACGREGOR. I would love to come. Thank you. Love to.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Mr. Danly, thank you for being here. I cannot tell you how excited we are that you are willing to do this, and look so forward to working with you. As we know, reliable, affordable energy and a resilient grid are critical for continued economic growth, especially in companies that make investment and expansion decisions based on access to inexpensive, reliable energy. As demand grows, so does the need for more baseload power, and I believe nuclear energy continues to be at the forefront of the conversation providing more safe, clean, reliable power to meet those growing demands. And we are very excited about this and we are looking forward to some growth.

What steps do you see the Department of Energy taking to advance nuclear, including new technologies such as small modular nuclear reactors?

Mr. DANLY. Thank you for the question, Senator.

In fact, in most of my discussions with the members of the Committee, the subject of advancing nuclear energy has been very common in all the talks that I have had. Probably the most important thing that the Department of Energy can do—and in fact, has done, right, the first civilian nuclear power demonstrations were done in a national lab where the Department of Energy started the entire process of creating civilian nuclear power—is to continue the work that is being done in Idaho National Lab to prove and have demonstration cases for SMRs and next-generation nuclear power. There are any number of regulatory and commercial hurdles to commercialization of nuclear, all of which I would love to see either overcome or changed. I don't see a way that we can meet the demand that we are facing without having nuclear power as part of the solution. Right now, it makes about 20 percent of the total generation in the United States, but if we increase our—load at the rate that I think we are going to, we are going to have to build more nuclear to provide that baseload generation. And so, the Department of Energy is going to be key to that.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Thank you, and I am out of time.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Gallego.

Senator GALLEGO. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I feel like I am going to sound like a broken record because when you are this low on the dais, everyone takes all of the great questions, but number one, to echo Senator King's comments on staffing at our national parks, and I spoke earlier with you about this—in Arizona, we are entirely dependent, especially in the northern Arizona region, the economy is entirely dependent on our national parks and tourism. So we want to make sure that there is some good thought and forethought before we have more layoffs, and if possible, to bring back these workers because there actually are not that many in Arizona to begin with, but the fact is, they produce billions and billions of jobs because they get such a great experience visiting our, I think you said—did you say gems or gyms as I was walking in?

Senator KING. Gems.

Senator GALLEGO. Jams?

Senator KING. G, E, M.

Senator GALLEGOS. G, E, M. Okay, sorry. English is my second language so sometimes things will—and then just moving on, further conversations on SMRs and nuclear power. When I was meeting with Secretary Wright during his nomination, we talked about the need for more nuclear energy deployment, especially in Arizona. We have a three-prong problem, which is a good problem. People want to move to Arizona because it's a great state. They have great weather, and great representation in my opinion, but we also have a great economy, which is a highly skilled, high-energy economy, whether it's chips or the ancillary businesses that feed into chips, and we have data warehouses that are moving in to Arizona because Arizona, for a lot of its problems that we do have when it comes to forest fires, the likelihood of us having any type of massive, massive emergency that is going to destroy these data warehouses that are worth billions of dollars is slim to none.

So what does that mean? We have an energy problem coming up in Arizona. Thirty percent of our energy portfolio is nuclear. I would like to see it grow. And so, I want to make sure that we can do anything we can to do that, including fixing regulatory burdens and hurdles or anything else. So I would love to make sure that we have an ability to work with that in a bipartisan manner because the country that can deploy quicker and faster nuclear energy is going to be the country that is going to be able to really own the next 100 years. And AI is really important, but AI only matters if you actually can energize it and actually create it and move that energy.

So since everyone took my questions, I will go into something more deeper with Ms. MacGregor here in terms of drought in Arizona, especially with Glen Canyon, something that I think you worked on when you were on the House Natural Resources Committee with me. In the last four years, we have learned from Reclamation that Glen Canyon Dam has design flaws that limit its ability to pass water at low elevations, which is really bad when we have drought. So we need to fix this dam as soon as possible and we need the ability to pass water around the dam if hydrology gets worse—so, if we just don't have enough snowmelt. I raised this issue with Secretary Burgum in his hearing, but I would like to just ask you too. Will you make fixing this dam that delivers water to approximately 30 million people in the Lower Basin a priority?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Senator, I know that we had a great conversation about drought in the West and how that impacts water users in your state, especially for hydropower too, I believe. And I am curious about some of the decisions of the last Administration, and I know that was an alternative, I think, that was scoped in one of their initial reviews of alternatives. So I will absolutely commit to working with you on that and other issues related to drought in the West.

Senator GALLEGOS. And back to the drought questions, Arizona is where whiskey is for drinking and water is for fighting. The Colorado River supports a total \$1.4 trillion economy, and then it's a primary water source for now 40 million people across seven western states. It also, of course, supports 5.5 million acres of agriculture, tribes, 11 national parks. Since 2001, the Colorado River community has been grappling with risk and uncertainty in avail-

able water supplies at increasing intensity. Would you please just share your thoughts on the key priorities that DOI will use to avoid the need for crisis-to-crisis management and provide greater predictability in available water supplies for our communities?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Absolutely. I know that the law of the river is incredibly important to so many. I think it's the seven Basin States. They are almost all represented on this Committee, and I know there are a lot of opinions reaching across all those states and their needs, and not just the states, but tribes, and as you said, the 40 million people who depend on that—getting it right.

My hope is ultimately that that is what—and remains and has been successful in the past—is a state-brokered solution, and Interior will be playing a role in that. And I think that is one of the important issues facing the water and science hallway in that Department.

Senator GALLEGO. Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Cassidy, you are up next.

Senator CASSIDY. Okay. Thank you both, because I had a chance to meet with you both, and some of these questions seem like what we have talked about. I just want it for the public record, if you will.

Ms. MacGregor, last week the Department of the Interior's Office of Natural Resources Revenue announced its 2024 disbursements to the four states along the Gulf of America. As expected, the revenues from oil and gas development from GOMESA far exceeded the \$375 million cap. Now, if the cap were higher, there would be dollars there to help rebuild coastline to protect communities from hurricanes like Katrina or from, which hit both of our states—Iida, Harvey, et cetera, because we know that when you build out your wetlands, that you absorb the impact from the hurricane, which means that your settled areas have less damage. We use that money in our state for flood protection and for coastal restoration by a state constitutional mandate.

So that said, I have a bill—the RISEE Act—which would lift the cap on state funds under GOMESA, ensuring that states hosting energy development directly benefit from those activities. Given your experience as Deputy Secretary of the Interior, how important is an effective model for revenue sharing?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Thank you, Senator, for the question, and I think with you hailing from Louisiana, and now me, from Florida—hurricanes—I have a renewed appreciation for their devastation. And I, when it comes to revenue sharing, I absolutely agree with you. It is the law now. It's in GOMESA. We are required to faithfully execute on GOMESA when it comes to revenue sharing, and as many of the Senators here on this dais also know, those dollars are also dedicated to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has impacts in everyone's districts. So I look forward to working with you on that and I understand that it is important to all four Gulf states.

Senator CASSIDY. And so, to that degree, how would you envision working with the Secretary to leverage offshore energy in the Gulf of Mexico—excuse me, I'm sorry, I can't help it—to support energy dominance?

Ms. MACGREGOR. So for leveraging greater offshore oil and gas in the Gulf of America, we will—we have a lot to work on, and I think it's important that Senators understand we will obey the law, we will follow the contours of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, as required, but I do think the American people would like to see more than just two to three lease sales. Historically, in the past, we have had, really, quite a few prodigious lease sales, and not just in the Gulf of America—Alaska and beyond. And so, I know the resources are concentrated a lot on the Gulf of America and up in Alaska, and we look forward to working with everyone on measures that will further embrace offshore energy.

Senator CASSIDY. Mr. Danly, Louisiana is currently home to more than 60 percent of the current LNG exports, and a large number of LNG projects are in the pipeline—excuse the pun—awaiting permitting approval. And I appreciate what President Trump, Secretary Wright, and the Department of Energy have done to help unleash this LNG bonanza, if you will. What can DOE do to further eliminate barriers through LNG exporting, including through improved permitting?

Mr. DANLY. Thank you for the question, Senator.

It should probably come as no surprise that I care a lot about LNG exports. I worked on the subject from the Commission side for years. The most important thing is to return to the statutory standard in Section 3 of the Natural Gas Act, which has the inverted presumption for the granting of permits to non-free-trade-agreement countries, where you have to demonstrate affirmatively that the export is not consistent with the public interest, which is an analytical rubric that requires the examination of a handful of different elements in the application but return to that standard which had been the standard, invariably, for decades beforehand.

Senator CASSIDY. Let me ask you as well, in Baton Rouge last Friday, LSU and the Idaho National Laboratory signed an MOU to accelerate technology and talent development in Louisiana to benefit the rest of the nation. This is the first formal partnership between a national lab and a Louisiana university. So I am just going to ask: How can you ensure that DOE labs prioritize research supporting my state's energy and manufacturing sectors?

Mr. DANLY. So I am not at the DOE, and I don't know the details of all of these partnerships between universities and the labs, but I am happy to talk to you as much as you want, should I be confirmed, to ensure we have as much cooperation between the institutions as we can get.

Senator CASSIDY. That would be good because, if you will, we have the ecosystem that is developing the technology for not only our nation, but for the rest of the world. And obviously, I would like my Louisiana talent to be able to benefit from that development being supported by the DOE.

Mr. DANLY. I think it's fundamental to the DOE's objectives with the national labs in its research mission to get as much talent as we can from wherever it is possible. We want the absolute best scientists and engineers working on the hardest problems.

Senator CASSIDY. Sounds great. Thank you. I yield.

Senator BARRASSO [presiding]. Senator Cortez Masto.

Oh, sorry, Senator Hirono, I apologize.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

Welcome to both of you. As part of my responsibility to ensure the fitness of the all nominees who come before any of my committees, I ask the following two initial questions, and we will start with Ms. MacGregor.

Since you became a legal adult, have you ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed any verbal or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature?

Ms. MACGREGOR. I have not.

Mr. DANLY. No.

Senator HIRONO. Have you ever faced discipline or entered into a settlement related to this kind of conduct?

Ms. MACGREGOR. I'm sorry, have I ever?

Senator HIRONO. Have you ever faced discipline or entered into a settlement related to this kind of conduct?

Ms. MACGREGOR. I have not.

Mr. DANLY. No.

Senator HIRONO. For Ms. MacGregor, on DOGE's list of federal lease terminations, on that list is the Ironworks Building in Hilo, Hawaii. This building currently houses U.S. Geological Survey employees that work for the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, which was destroyed during the 2018 Kilauea eruption, and this building provides temporary office and storage space while the permanent Hawaiian Volcano Observatory is built on the campus of the University of Hawaii at Hilo, planned for completion in two years. This move to terminate the lease with no clear plan on where these employees will work or store their equipment in the interim makes me question this Administration's regard for the important role the volcano observatories play in keeping our communities safe and informed.

Do you believe that the USGS Volcano Hazards Program is important, and if so, what will you do as Deputy Secretary to ensure that USGS employees in Hilo are able to carry out their critical lifesaving work?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Senator, thank you for that important question. And I want you to know that in the first Trump Administration, I spent quite a bit of time with the USGS Hazards Team, especially on some of the seismic systems installed up in the Pacific Northwest related to earthquake early warning systems. I know how important they are to communities, and while I am not in the building, I haven't seen a list of cancellations. I will absolutely work with you on your needs and for those of the people of Hawaii.

Senator HIRONO. Okay, that sounds as though you consider their work to be very critical and that they obviously need a place to work from and store the things that they need. So we will work to make sure that that happens? Should you be confirmed, of course.

Ms. MACGREGOR. Yes, I will work with you, especially on a lot of the hazard systems, yes.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

Also for you, in your 2019 testimony before this Committee, you noted that your introduction to the Department's mission was through visiting Valley Forge National Park and that visiting national parks drove your passion for American history and your understanding for the importance of preserving these special places.

Similarly, during Secretary Burgum's nomination hearing earlier this year, he asserted that, and I quote, "We have to protect every single inch of our national parks."

There are currently hundreds of mining claims within and thousands more near national park boundaries threatening the preservation of these special places. A couple of weeks ago, President Trump issued an executive order directing Secretary Burgum to prioritize mineral production and mining-related purposes as the primary—as a primary use of federal land with mineral deposits.

My question to you is, how would allowing companies to mine in or near national parks preserve "every single inch of our national parks?"

Ms. MACGREGOR. Well, Senator, I am unfamiliar of any situation where there is mining directly in a national park. Can you give me an example that you are referring to that I can take a look at?

Senator HIRONO. Well, there are hundreds of mining claims, and if the President says that these are the claims that can be acted upon, you are going to be directed to let them do so, I suppose. That is the question.

Ms. MACGREGOR. I think, when I hear—

Senator HIRONO. How does that comport with the Secretary's desire to protect every single inch of our national parks?

Ms. MACGREGOR. It sounds like we might have a little bit of a misunderstanding of—when I hear public lands, I think multiple use and public sustained yield under FLPMA lands, multiple use lands managed by the BLM, not by the National Park Service. And my understanding of the protections under the Organic Act and the establishment of these national parks, their maintenance, and their continued management—

Senator HIRONO. So you would say—excuse me, my time is about pretty much up—but you would say that allowing mining in our national parks would be probably incompatible to the desire to save—

Ms. MACGREGOR. I can't—

Senator HIRONO. I mean, you would want to save these treasures as a priority.

Ms. MACGREGOR. Senator, I am not familiar of any national park, and I could be completely wrong, but of any national park where there is mining within the boundaries of the park.

Senator HIRONO. No, the President wants you to go there then.

Okay, we obviously are going to need to see what happens because he wants these federal lands to be used for extraction purposes.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you, Senator Hirono.

Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome, both of you.

Ms. MacGregor, I enjoyed our conversation. I am looking forward to you being back to fix a lot of things. Many of the issues that we spoke about in my office related to federal lands, better consultation with Alaska Natives, extending as well to restoring what we do with our multiple-use lands, natural fires, natural hazards, like wildfires, producing more of our energy, a lot to do.

And Mr. Danly, you have been before this Committee multiple times as well. I am looking forward to working with you to help address some of Alaska's energy challenges, everything from microgrids, to geothermal, to advanced nuclear, and I want to follow on the comment that was made by the Senator from Arizona. I just came from a critical minerals discussion this morning, and as I look to our opportunity to be able to access these great resources that we need, until we figure out how to deal with power in some of these remote areas, it's going to be really hard to do. And I look at small modular reactors, the advancements that can come from here as a real opportunity.

I want to address a couple of questions to both of you. Hopefully, they should be very quick and easy. I know that you are not in the building yet, I get that. But we have all watched as we have seen this effort to reduce the size of government, and certainly within the Department of Energy and the Department of the Interior. I have been concerned and have expressed how many of these employees have been treated in this process. I would ask that you both commit, if you are confirmed, that you will abide by the statutory requirements to notify Congress of any plans to reorganize, restructure, or implement reductions in force. I am also the Chairman on the Interior Appropriations Committee that has oversight here. We have sent letters to the Secretaries themselves with regards to the requirement in law about advanced notification, and then, just from my perspective, as a Senator who represents a state that has a lot of public lands and big federal presence, we have a lot of engagement and interaction with you.

So I would just ask, again, if I can have your commitment that you will be transparent with us about what is coming and to abide by the statutory requirements to notify.

Ms. MACGREGOR. Senator, we will—I can commit to obey all federal laws when it comes to any of the efficiency efforts that we are working on.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Great. Thank you.

Mr. DANLY. I also commit to following the law for all of the efficiency efforts.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you.

I have had an opportunity to talk, not only to you, Ms. MacGregor, but certainly, my colleagues here on the Committee know that we are facing a situation in Alaska with declining production in Cook Inlet with regards to our natural gas, and in facing what I think is really an unforgivable direction, and that would be the prospect of LNG imports and potentially from Canada. So I would ask both of you to partner with me, with the delegation, to advance the Alaska projects and to support development of our resources so we can avoid the reliance on energy imports. For a state that has as much as the State of Alaska has, there is no good reason that we should be relying on Canada to keep our lights on.

So do I have that commitment from the both of you?

Ms. MACGREGOR. You sure do. And I was just as shocked when you informed me of that. And I look forward to working with you on those issues.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Great, thank you.

Mr. Danly.

Mr. DANLY. It's crazy to think that Alaska would be importing energy.

Senator MURKOWSKI. It is crazy.

Mr. DANLY. I absolutely commit to working on that with you.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Yes, you know—you both know—we have an awful lot to offer there.

Ms. MacGregor, I want to take you back to some of our greatest hits from when you were in the first Trump Administration. Some of the alphabet issues that you worked on—ITRs, PLOs. We have got to be making progress with that. Certainly, the President's executive order is going to help us there, but I also raised with you the issue of BIA probate and the extraordinary backlog that we are dealing with. It should not take five or ten or more years to resolve these probate cases. And I would just ask that you put a priority on these issues so that we can deal with something that has not only impacted us greatly in Alaska, but I think in so many other parts of the country as well.

Ms. MACGREGOR. I am so grateful that you raised that issue. I had never even heard of it before, but the first thing I thought is, if it's impacting you and the people of Alaska, it must be impacting so many more on this Committee and other parts of the States. So I look forward to working with you on that.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Great, thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, my time is expired.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you, Senator.

Senator HICKENLOOPER.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks to both of you for your past public service and your willingness to go back into the maelstrom.

I will start with you, Ms. MacGregor, and thank you for the time to come and visit. You know, the staffing cuts that were—there were the major cuts, and then people were put back, but even though they've been reinstated, there is another plan out that a quarter of all DOI employees are on the chopping block. And I think the volatility certainly has staff that I know in Colorado—and people that have reached out unnerved, and there is a level of anxiety there. And obviously the decisions that get made that I think you will have a voice in—I hope you will have a voice in—on staffing that will have consequences, have reverberations, in terms of how we use those lands in terms of conservation and recreation, not to mention energy production or critical minerals.

What are your plans—or how do you look at trying to ensure that the staff have that spirit, which—the good culture that any group needs to perform at a high level while they are working to protect some of our most valuable resources?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Well, thank you, Senator, and thank you for meeting with me. I had a great meeting with you. Talking about Pennsylvania was nice. When I review a lot of this, I have been watching, just like you all have, with media reports. I am not in the building, as we have talked about already, but I think there is a lot of, you know, questions I have, but I also think there is a lot of spin, and that tends to happen in these sort of instances. Ultimately, I support the President's efforts to achieve efficiency in the Federal Government. I think the endeavor to achieve efficiency

should be applauded. But I also agree with you that to achieve efficiency, you have to have talent to move permits, you have to have the talent and you have to have an inspired workforce to be able to do the work.

So I fully understand that that's part of the job going in the building, and I look forward to working with a lot of the same excellent career employees that I worked with the first time around and working to get moving on a lot of the actions we need to take at the Department.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Yes, well, again, I am no stranger to trying to make government more efficient. As mayor and as Governor, we did a hiring freeze for, I think, two and a half years when I was mayor as a way diminishing the workforce, but we found ways to use efficiencies to actually deliver more services to people at a lower cost. But I spent a quarter of my time in the agencies talking to the workforce and making sure that they were fired up and knew how valuable they were. I don't see that happening right now and I find it very concerning.

And Mr. Danly, the same question to you, with similar circumstances, I suspect.

Mr. DANLY. I am not at the Department of Energy, so of course, I don't know the details of anything that's going on there. I have read the same press accounts that everybody else has. You know, I am no stranger to dealing with the personnel end of administrative agencies. I was the Chairman of FERC, and I dealt with the personnel there, and I plan to do what I have always done before when my advice was sought, which is seek the input of the employment counsel and the ethics counsel at the Department, whenever making decisions regarding employment.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. All right, got it.

And I wanted to also talk to you a little bit about this effort to gain energy dominance, but a lot of the clawbacks that are being discussed, of funds that were originally appropriated to support projects to build advanced energy technologies and make investments to try and get electricity more reliable, more affordable. The last number we saw was that the DOE may rescind up to \$104 million of Colorado-based awards alone. And that's a rumor. I don't think there is—let's throw that number out, and let's throw that number away, but there is probably going to be a large number because there is a real push to try and find these savings. In many cases, these funds were already appropriated by and through Congress and they are for things like grid efficiency or grid reliability, or some other form of advanced technology.

Are you willing to commit that you will obey the law and make sure that we don't rescind funds that have been appropriated legally for these, I think in many cases, really important energy projects?

Mr. DANLY. So again, just like I said before, I have seen the same press accounts everybody else has. Actual rescissions, as far as I know, haven't occurred yet.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Right.

Mr. DANLY. And I don't know what the plans are, if there are, in fact, plans.

I absolutely commit to following the law. The focal point of my entire career so far is doing honor to the statute, and I will follow the law in discharging the duties of the Department.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. All right, well, I appreciate that.

I thank both of you. I think both of you are in crucial positions that are going to have—you are going to have a lot to do with what happens in the next couple of years, and we appreciate your service.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you, Senator Hickenlooper.

Senator Daines.

Senator DAINES. Chairman, thank you.

I am going to jump right in, Ms. MacGregor. In Montana, we are facing serious hurdles to implementing forest management projects due to litigation. Our forests no longer have loggers in them. They are crawling with lawyers. That's a problem. The situation was exacerbated in 2015 when the Ninth Circuit issued that Cottonwood decision. Today, as I speak, we have 300 million board-feet of timber tied up in litigation in Montana. Region 1, over 500 million board-feet tied up because of litigation. That Cottonwood decision creates a cyclical procedural requirement to consult under the Endangered Species Act. After a new species is listed, new critical habitat is designated, or "new information" is found. We just need to get the Ninth Circuit Court to be congruent with the other circuits, and that is essentially what the Cottonwood fix does. It has passed this Committee with strong bipartisan support. So we are ready to act on it yet again. We are going to need help getting it across the finish line and certainly on the President's desk.

We have seen hundreds of projects across states in the Ninth Circuit that are delayed because we have the Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service attempt to meet this ambiguous standard with no on-the-ground impact. We have this legislation, again, with strong bipartisan support. So my question is, would you commit to working with me and working with Congress, to ensure that a permanent solution is found, either through administrative action or through this legislative fix?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Senator, thank you for that important question, and it's probably no laughing matter. Forest management, I know, is life or death in a lot of your states. We absolutely commit, and I personally commit to working with you on that, and I know that getting—like I said in my opening statement—certainty so that these actions can continue is incredibly important. And I should say, I was very inspired by all of you in the efforts you all led to amend NEPA for the first time in 50 years in the Fiscal Responsibility Act. And I know when you come together, this body can do amazing things that help us implement our laws in a more efficient way.

Senator DAINES. Thank you. There are just so many wins if we can get this problem fixed in terms of improved wildlife habitat, improved economic benefits, and overall improved trout habitat in the streams that get hammered with the silting from the major disastrous wildfires. So lots of benefits, not to mention, we literally have had football games on Friday nights in Montana canceled because of air quality. This is not the smog of LA, this is smoke coming from these wildfires. So it's a health risk as well. And then, we,

of course, have the tragic examples of firefighters losing their lives trying to fight these very hot and robust fires.

Mr. Danly, a question for you. With your experience at FERC, you have firsthand knowledge of our energy and transmission needs. Our energy demand is only projected to grow, as we talked yesterday. And to meet this demand, we must expand our energy production, not replace it. With rising demand, and I will tell you, every time I meet with a tech CEO today, the conversation is not about the constraint of the workforce. The constraint is energy as we want to move forward here with a significant increase in data centers and so forth to meet the demands of AI and quantum computing. With rising demand, we also need to ensure we can maintain our grid stability. And the key to grid stability is going to be more baseload power. Doing this will ensure we have access to affordable, reliable power, 24/7 and year-round. And as we talked yesterday, our transmission systems are crucial to deliver this power, but we need to expand our systems if we are going to bring new projects onto the grid. In Montana, the Department of Energy is involved in numerous energy and transmission projects that will help enhance our energy dominance and support our energy needs.

My question, Mr. Danly, is how do you envision the Department of Energy strengthening partnerships with our states, with our communities, and with energy companies to expand energy production and to expand transmission across the United States?

Mr. DANLY. So thank you for the question, Senator and I appreciated the conversation we had in your office yesterday. The Department of Energy has innumerable different programs that are designed to either promote the commercialization of or help with the improvement of the preexisting facilities that are fundamental to keeping the transmission system working or developing new generation. And the President and the Secretary have both shown extreme enthusiasm for the idea of getting as much new generation online and interconnected as possible. And the Department is going to use every one of the tools at its disposal to ensure that we have as much generation available and as resilient a bulk power system as we can get.

And you are correct that the constraining factor for all of the tech companies right now is power, not just the amount of delivered real power, but also the interconnection sites that are available to actually connect the facilities to the bulk power system and the availability of power that is on a reliable basis. It can be very challenging in constrained areas to achieve both of those. And we will not be able to meet the commercial demands of our companies if we don't ensure that there is more power available.

Senator DAINES. Thanks, Mr. Danly.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you very much, Senator Daines.

Senator Cortez Masto.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you.

Mr. Danly, during your FERC nomination hearing before this Committee in November 2019, I asked you then if you agreed that renewable energy should continue to play an important role in our nation's energy mix. And you replied, "undoubtedly." Then in response to my follow-up question, you agreed that renewables like

wind and solar power can be reliably integrated into the power grid. Do you still agree with that today?

Mr. DANLY. Thank you for the question, Senator, and I remember that confirmation hearing like it was yesterday. Yes, they can be integrated. There are challenges to integration. It's not the same type of generation that the bulk power system was built on from its infancy. And when you reach a certain threshold, those challenges become multiplicative. And so, there are thresholds that can be reached where it becomes more difficult. But yes, the idea that in a time of demand like we are facing now, that we would turn away any megawatts that are available seems irrational to me, but there are engineering problems that attend to use of intermittents.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. In response to another follow-up question, you agreed that states hold the authority under the Federal Power Act to establish the resource mix that best serves their customers. Do you still hold that position?

Mr. DANLY. The law hasn't changed, and neither has my opinion. The states are granted the authority to determine what generation is within their borders.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you.

And then, this is a question for both of you. As you've heard from some of my colleagues, we have been concerned by what you might be walking into in your respective departments. We're seeing decisions by the current Administration, from tariffs, to firings, to restructurings, that are undercutting our national and local economies, including in emerging and critical industries like outdoor recreation, travel, and tourism. The chaotic executive orders and actions often have to be walked back or reversed, such as—and we have heard a little bit about this—the firing of federal firefighters, or in my state, nuclear safety officials within DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration. So my question to both of you is, and I will start with you, Mr. Danly—if confirmed, will you commit to transparency on future actions taken by you and your departments and prioritize substantive responses to overdue questions that me and my colleagues have requested in letters?

Mr. DANLY. So this Committee has seen my correspondence in my response to your letters before when I was a Commissioner. I did not give you the pro-forma one-pagers, I had these 90-page mis-sives that completely laid bare everything at the Commission. I have no problem telling this Committee or any Member of Congress anything they want to know about what we do.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Great, that's a yes. I appreciate that.

Ms. MacGregor.

Ms. MACGREGOR. Senator, I also agree with you that sunshine is always important for this Committee and also for the American people to understand how their government is working. So we will work with you.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you.

Ms. MacGregor, much of the West has been experiencing a historic drought, and I think one of my colleagues may have asked this question of you already, but let me further elaborate. Nevada is one of the several Basin States that relies on water from the Colorado River. We are currently engaged in negotiations to set the guidelines for future water allocations because we also know that

the current guidelines expire in 2027, and we need to start now, and we have started, even before now. But the new operations have to be in place before the end of 2026 to avoid confusion and conflict for the entire Southwestern United States. Despite 20 years of collaboration, the Upper and Lower Basin have not yet reached an agreement. The Department of the Interior must be a leader to bring the seven Basin States together on these alternatives and develop the post-2026 guidelines.

As Deputy Secretary, how will you prioritize this process to ensure the Basin can reach a consensus and avoid litigation before time runs out with the necessary guidelines that we have to pass?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Senator, thank you for that question. I was able to enjoy several meetings with many Senators on this dais about this particular issue. And I know that avoiding litigation on this incredibly important Basin is absolutely a must, and it's going to be a priority of the Department to work together with the seven Basin States, tribes, water users, hydropower generators, everyone—the 40 million people who rely on a smart solution that must be state-led.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you. I am looking forward to that. We need that involvement. And I—if you don't know, the Senators in the Basin States, we all work very well together on this particular issue, and we are looking for that involvement from the Department of the Interior as well. So thank you.

Senator BARRASSO. Senator Padilla.

Senator PADILLA. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Echoing Senator Cortez Masto's comments on the entire Basin States working so well together, because you know how critical that is, and we had that conversation in my office just yesterday.

But Ms. MacGregor, I definitely appreciated the opportunity to go through some of my priorities with you when we met previously, and I hope you took away from our meeting the constant theme of collaboration on so many of these intricate and complex issues, including but not limited to the recently established national monuments in California. As I mentioned, these protected landscapes, we crafted very intentionally to ensure that there is no energy potential that is being compromised as a result of the designation of the Chuckwalla and Sattitla National Monument, and I think you have that confirmation through the endorsements of these monuments by energy utilities and energy developers. I raised the same background with Secretary Burgum, both in our conversations and in writing, that the Department's review that has been called for—public lands must include meeting with the stakeholders that were involved—stakeholders that include the Congressional delegation, the Governor of California, the state's energy agencies, local officials, and notably, the tribal leaders who actually spearheaded the movements and the creation of these monuments.

And so, it took me a little bit by surprise when last month the Administration issued, but then rescinded, a fact sheet that suggested that the White House terminated the recently designated national monuments, all despite the fact that the President, in my opinion, doesn't have the legal authority to undo a monument under the Antiquities Act. I am not sure if you were involved at all with the crafting of the executive order and/or the fact sheet,

but I guess my first question would be, are you aware of the broad, bipartisan, local, and tribal support for the Chuckwalla and Sattitla National Monuments?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Sir, I have closely watched that monument establishment.

Senator PADILLA. Is that a yes?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Yes.

Senator PADILLA. Okay, because we want to get you on the record recognizing the broad-based support for the creation of these monuments.

Now, more broadly, as a matter of policy, do you believe that local communities and tribal leaders should have a say in the management of their public lands?

Ms. MACGREGOR. I think local involvement is something that everyone on this dais agrees with.

Senator PADILLA. Okay, well, I am talking just about you, not the folks on the dais. You are the nominee before us—

Ms. MACGREGOR. Local involvement is embedded in almost all the Organic Acts at the Department, so, yes.

Senator PADILLA. Good, good. Good-faith consultation and engagement is what we are looking for.

Now, as the Department did under the first Trump Administration, will you commit to releasing any rollbacks that you may be considering for public comment prior to taking action, if you are confirmed?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Senator, it's hard for me to commit on a completely hypothetical question related to the Antiquities Act, especially given that the Antiquities Act of 1906 has the designation of monuments purely within the ambit of the President of the United States. But I do know that that monument and many monuments are important to you and the State of California, and I will absolutely work with you. But I haven't seen any direction from the President yet. I am familiar with that of the past, but I have not seen any yet, unless I have missed something related to a review of our national monuments.

Senator PADILLA. Okay. I wasn't trying to debate the Antiquities Act, just referencing what seemed to be the policy in the first Trump Administration of sharing publicly before a natural effort to roll back, and I would hope that continues in this second Administration.

A question in my time remaining for Mr. Danly. California proudly was the first state in the nation to launch a hydrogen hub. We refer to it as ARCHES, which will facilitate a network of hydrogen production sites to catalyze the use of hydrogen throughout California, and frankly, jump-start the hydrogen economy, not just in California, but across the country. The California hub enjoys bipartisan support from our California delegation. However, last week, the Department of Energy "cut list" reportedly included ARCHES and other hydrogen hubs to be cut. So I want to point out that ARCHES, again, is not just critical to California, but critical to our national economy.

If confirmed, would you commit to working with California to ensure that funding is not arbitrarily taken away?

Mr. DANLY. Thank you for the question, Senator. And I have had a series of inquiries like this along the way. Of course, I am not in the building, and I don't know what is being contemplated, but I am obviously happy to work with any member of the Committee on any of the subjects that the DOE is working on in their state.

Senator PADILLA. And should you be confirmed, would you be willing to commit to meet with the ARCHES staff before any final decision on cuts are made?

Mr. DANLY. Again, I am not certain what, should I be confirmed, what my schedule is going to be like or what the normal fora are for engagement. I don't know what the rules are——

Senator PADILLA. Meeting with the leadership of the hub that may be on the chopping block, but one of the most important hubs in America.

Mr. DANLY. I certainly would have no objection to doing so, I just, it's a little premature to start filling calendars for a position I haven't yet been confirmed——

Senator PADILLA. I am not looking dates and times, just your commitment and willingness to——

Mr. DANLY. I am perfectly happy to work on any of the projects that the DOE is working on.

Senator PADILLA. Okay, we will be following up.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you.

Senator Hoeven.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to both of you. I appreciate you stopping by and visiting with me, and look forward very much to working with you.

Starting with you, Ms. MacGregor. We have got some legislative priorities, and I would like your help on it. So I am going to ask on the record here if will help us. We are working on the North Dakota Trust Lands Completion Act, which would allow tribes in our state to swap land with the state to the benefit of the tribes and to the benefit of the state. It involves tribal-owned land and state-owned land. That's one. The other is the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library. You might have heard about it, perhaps Secretary Burgum mentioned it to you because he has really worked on it hard. It's a great project. We have worked on it hard. And we have passed legislation here through this Committee and across and through the Congress to make it happen, but there is more to do. And then also the Dakota Water Resources Act, which, actually, Senator Padilla co-sponsored with me.

But those three are legislative priorities, and I ask for your help with them. Are you willing to help?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Absolutely, sir.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you.

The next is, the Biden Administration implemented on BLM lands what they call a BLM Public Lands Rule. Essentially, it closes off about half of the BLM lands in our state—and we have a lot of them—to oil and gas and closes off almost all of them for federal coal. And I would ask that you work with us to roll back that harmful policy.

Ms. MACGREGOR. I am familiar with that rule, sir. And I would be happy to work with you ongoing on that matter.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you.

Are you committed to multiple use on federal lands? It is the law, by the way.

Ms. MACGREGOR. It's the law, sir, so yes.

Senator HOEVEN. Good.

And then, in a lot of cases, we have split estates on mineral interests between the Federal Government and maybe the state or private individuals. Don't you think it's important that we get timely response from the Federal Government so as to not disenfranchise individual private property rights or the states?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Absolutely, sir. That was in my opening statement. I think timeliness is incredibly important.

Senator HOEVEN. And the same on NEPA reviews?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Yes, sir, that is also the law.

Senator HOEVEN. And then, are you pro-horse or anti-horse?

Ms. MACGREGOR. It depends on the horse.

[Laughter.]

Senator HOEVEN. Good answer. As somebody who was raised with horses, she knows her stuff. In this case, I am looking for a pro-horse answer though, because we are working on legislation to protect the horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park, and would welcome and appreciate your assistance with it, if you are so inclined.

Ms. MACGREGOR. I have some ideas for you.

Senator HOEVEN. Great.

Ms. MACGREGOR. Some horses.

Senator HOEVEN. Yes, yes. But you are willing to work with us on it?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Absolutely.

Senator HOEVEN. Okay, thank you.

Mr. Danly, we need more baseload for the stability of the grid, and I mean, I think you coming into this position to work with Secretary Wright is really outstanding given your, not only legal background and all that, but your work on the FERC. I mean, I think that is just a great background for this position, and so I welcome that. We need more baseload on the grid. I want you to talk about that and then I also want you to talk about how we get, you know, carbon capture technologies to economic viability. We have technological viability, as our Chair knows, or current acting Chair, I guess. He is actually our Whip, but I see they are letting him chair the Committee today, so. How do we get more baseload? How do we get to economic viability for carbon capture technologies?

Mr. DANLY. So this has been—the subject of needing more baseload power for the stability of the bulk electric system is a subject that I talked about multiple times, including in colloquies with you, in front of this Committee when I was at FERC, and that still remains true. The baseload needs now though are not merely for the services that are required to keep the system stable, from spinning mass and the like, but at this point we need more baseload power simply because we are having increasing demand for real power delivered. And so, it now has the dual purpose of we need baseload to shore up the stability of bulk power system and we actually just need to deliver more power reliably.

Senator HOEVEN. Right, and so, for Maine and New Mexico, places like that, we need baseload so they don't have problems getting their power, right? It's really important for our good friends there.

Mr. DANLY. So the Federal Power Act is a national act that tries to make sure that everybody can have access to power across state borders. And yes, baseload power anywhere in an interconnection is good for everybody in the interconnection. How to get more of it? We have problems with the development of transmission, which was a subject that had come up before, but there is also the problem, at least in the areas that are regulated by FERC jurisdictional markets—baseload power has historically been undervalued. And we see this in retirements of assets that still have useful life in them. We see the scarcity in the pricing in the most recent prints in the PJM base residual auction, and the way fundamentally to fix this is to pay rates that are commensurate with the benefits that baseload power delivers to the power system.

Senator HOEVEN. Yeah, see, this is why your experience on the FERC is going to be very important to DOE. And of course, I meant to include Washington State in making sure that that power is there and viable and available on the hottest day or the coldest day, whatever the needs may be.

But again, I think that this kind of expertise is going to be very important as we address the issues in our national grids.

Mr. DANLY. It is critical. And without the deployment of sufficient generation, the United States—AI isn't the only source of the demand that is rising, but it is a very important one. The Biden Administration estimated that we were about 18 months ahead in AI development for the language training models in China. Eighteen months is the blink of an eye in utility planning terms, and there is real need to develop generation to meet that.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and also Mr. Ranking Member, I appreciate it.

Senator BARRASSO. Senator Cantwell.

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just asking staff if they remember the last time that somebody voluntarily mentioned the Federal Power Act at a hearing, so thank you.

Mr. DANLY. I would hope that I was that person.

Senator CANTWELL. You were. You were.

Well, we will go back in the record and search and see when was the last time somebody brought it up. We often bring it up as members, but not a witness voluntarily. So I think it shows your prowess. So let me just jump right into it.

As it relates to—we will just stick on this subject for a second. Do you commit to opposing any proposals to auction off assets, including those owned by Bonneville Power Administration?

Mr. DANLY. I'm sorry, could you repeat that? I had trouble hearing you.

Senator CANTWELL. We don't want to—BPA's a unique situation.

Mr. DANLY. Oh, Bonneville, yes.

Senator CANTWELL. Will you commit to not auctioning off any of the PMA assets, including those by Bonneville?

Mr. DANLY. So the Power Marketing Administrations are fundamental components of the Department of Energy and provide elec-

tricity to huge swaths of territory in America. I love the Power Marketing Administrations. I just don't know anything about—I know there have been talks at different times for the Power Marketing Administrations to be privatized and the like. I have no interest in that subject historically in my career. And I don't really know enough about that to give an informed answer here. It certainly isn't anything I have heard talked about recently, but—

Senator CANTWELL. Yeah, well, maybe, yeah, take a little homework assignment.

Mr. DANLY. Yeah.

Senator CANTWELL. Bad idea.

Okay so, PNNL, as it relates to grid modernization, chemistry, and materials science—will you advocate for robust resources for our national labs to continue to play a role on the forefront of innovation as it relates to key energy national defense applications?

Mr. DANLY. I think the national labs are fundamental to America's geostrategic position in the world, and on top of that, I am just a really big fan of them.

Senator CANTWELL. Well, a lot of great work is being done there. I invite you to come also and see the fusion technology in the Pacific Northwest—three different fusion companies that are underway. I do think we have to think about this, like if the United States wants to run fast, if we do, if somebody creates a miracle solution here, how do we get it integrated very quickly into the grid. So I invite you to come and look at that.

Hanford—very big issue for us, and Hanford cleanup. I am concerned about the layoffs from DOGE and retirements. And so, I don't want to lose qualified workers. One of the major obligations by the Federal Government is to live up to the Tri-Party Agreement. And so, will you commit to supporting a budget that meets the milestones of that agreement, which is previous energy secretaries committing to a plan for cleanup? So these are legal commitments that everybody has made, our state, just as a state where this activity is housed, and obviously, concern about the environmental contamination played a key role in getting those agreements. But will you live up to a budget that lives up to the milestones of the agreement?

Mr. DANLY. So fundamentally, the budgets are not the purview of the position to which I have been nominated, but I will say this—the cleanup of the legacy waste sites is one of the handful of the truly core missions of the Department. And I have every intention of abiding by the agreement, and to the extent that the Department has obligations to discharge, I will see them discharged properly.

Senator CANTWELL. So you would worry if, like, so many workers were laid off in the area that you didn't think you could meet those milestone agreements—that would be something you would be concerned about?

Mr. DANLY. I mean, put another way, would I be concerned, should I be confirmed, would I be concerned that we didn't have the workforce to discharge the duties that Congress gave us? Yes. But that would apply to virtually anything that we are told to do, so.

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you. I need to get to Ms. MacGregor.

If I could, last year, we spent 96 days at the National Preparedness Levels of 4 and 5, which means we are using all of our available resources to fight fires. Over the last ten years, that only happened in 2021. So, we are very concerned about what this year's fire season is going to look like, and so, we don't want to see a lay-off of critical employees that are going to help us for the future. The Department has a responsibility to fight here. Will you support—how would you make sure that we have the workforce that we need as part of our incident command teams, and if confirmed, will you not support a production plan, including off-selling of public lands that would reduce our access?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Thank you for the question, Senator.

I stated earlier that I think wildfire—and I think I stated in my last hearing that it is one thing that actually keeps me up at night in this job—if confirmed—that wildland firefighters are absolutely part of our essential workforce, and getting them out there is just as equally important as wildland wildfire management efforts that the Department, not only our Department—states, in partnership with us, local communities, the Department of Agriculture, do to help give that toe-hold so that we can fight fire better and more effectively. And I absolutely will commit to you to work on wildland firefighting staffing to make sure we have what we need.

Senator CANTWELL. I am asking—the two of you are the first witnesses to come before us since all the DOGE cuts. So I am asking you, specifically, will you stop any cuts that will affect wildland firefighting efforts?

Ms. MACGREGOR. I will absolutely evaluate any proposed cuts, should they be, you know, proposed for wildland firefighting cuts, and review those very closely. I can't imagine a situation where that would occur, but if it did, I would want to make sure that we are balancing and keeping the resources we need to fight fire.

Senator CANTWELL. Yes, I think most of us would just be able to agree today. No one here wants those cuts, no one. We think we need more resources. We think we have a pretty good—you will see a lot of western members here, and we have a very good handle on what's happening. We have had to deal with it for a long time. And so, we had to fight to get the money out of deficit reduction and back into the firefighting budget. That was a major bipartisan accomplishment, mostly led by this Committee. And now, we just want to keep moving forward. The Palisades fire was more than a wake-up call, more than a wake-up call. So we need more resources, not less.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you, Senator Cantwell.

Senator McCormick.

Senator MCCORMICK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to our nominees. Congratulations to both of you and your families.

Mr. Danly, I am going to start with you. I am thrilled to see a fellow Army man come before our Committee, and we are talking a lot today about artificial intelligence and the importance of it for our economy and for our national security. To reap the full benefits of the AI revolution, we need power. We need an expansion of natural gas production and nuclear power, in particular, to power the next generation of AI. What do you think are the biggest challenges

to expanding natural gas production and to increasing nuclear capacity in the United States?

Mr. DANLY. Most of them are regulatory. The actual siting of generation is left to the states, as was alluded to earlier, but the regulatory burdens that attend the submission of any Section 7—that is NGA Section 7 Natural Gas Pipeline—are so profound that the risk premiums make it almost impossible to allocate capital rationally. And so, even though over the short and intermediate term, natural gas is the obvious solution to plug holes in resource adequacy, especially in areas that have constrained transmission systems, the biggest problem is the permitting of natural gas pipelines.

And as far as nuclear goes, you know, we recently had two new AP1000 units that went live in Georgia. My hope at the time had been that, once the first company went through the minefield clearing the path, everybody would follow after them immediately, and that hasn't happened. And my understanding, from the people I talk to about it mostly is, first of all, AP1000s are really big, but the main problem is the rates paid on the back end in the markets. For any of the areas that the two-thirds of Americans who are served by FERC markets, it is impossible to get rates paid, especially at capacity prices, that are commensurate with the upfront costs and the long-term ongoing costs of running a nuclear power plant. Even though the actual cost of delivered power is completely reasonable, it's everything that goes into the setting, construction application, and permitting that is expensive, not to mention the after-the-fact litigation. And so, really these are regulatory challenges primarily.

Senator McCORMICK. Very good, thank you.

And Ms. MacGregor, good to see you the other day. We didn't talk about this, but I wanted to bring up the question of critical minerals, which are so necessary to our national security and to ensuring that we maintain a dominant position vis-à-vis China, our primary competitor. And China, as you know, is seeking to get control of rare mineral supply chains around the world with mineral extraction processing and refining. As you know also, domestically many of those critical minerals lie on federal land. It takes years to develop these mining projects, and the constant delays and overzealous environmental regulations have, in the past, deterred investments in these capital-intensive projects.

So what will you do—what can you do to tackle these challenges to spur mineral development in the United States?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Senator, that is a great question, and coming from Pennsylvania, which is one of the original mining states, I think it's incredibly important that our country continue to be a leader when it comes to mining, milling, and production. And in my past position at the Department of the Interior, I had the stress of reviewing the United States Geological Survey Annual Mineral Commodity Report that goes between 18 to 20 different mineral commodities every year where we are nearly 100 percent reliant on foreign adversaries. And that worries me very much, especially when we have abundant resources here and smart regulations to be able to deploy them and mine them responsibly. And I personally, in the past, worked on a lithium mine in the State of Nevada,

in my position in the Department last time around. I envision that there are more opportunities in the future. And if confirmed, I really look forward to working on that because I think we need to be a leader.

Senator McCORMICK. Thank you.

Mr. Danly, I am going to try to squeeze in one more question about the national labs. This Committee had a meeting about China and its attempt to infiltrate our universities, our national labs, as our primary adversary. As Deputy Secretary, what role do you expect to play in implementing, hopefully, more robust research security policies at DOE and across our national labs to make sure we are protecting against the risk of foreign researchers taking our innovation and technology elsewhere?

Mr. DANLY. Yes, so, I think that's—when I first learned about the sheer volume of foreign researchers that came to the national labs and used the facilities in close proximity to the other researchers, I was really shocked by it. And when I further looked into it and found that there were very few—seemingly, at least by the press reports, press accounts—few constraints placed on that research being done and the choice and vetting of the people that arrive, I was, again, shocked by it.

So I don't know the specific actions that I would take, should I be confirmed, but it is something that I think is really serious and has to be dealt with immediately.

Senator McCORMICK. Thank you.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you, Senator McCormick.

Senator King, did you have an additional question?

Senator KING. Yes, I wanted to follow up—a very productive discussion, Mr. Danly. First, I would mention that one of bottlenecks, Senator, on natural gas is it takes five years to get a turbine. They are so backed up that that's a bottleneck in itself. If you wanted to build a gas turbine, you would need at least five years and then, of course, you have to do the ancillary transmission. But I wanted to talk about—we often use the word baseload, and you mentioned earlier in your exchange with Senator Cortez Masto that renewables—solar and wind—can play an important role in meeting this energy demand that is coming. And if you add storage, then you've got baseload. And I think one of the most important things that the Department is doing is research into battery storage. I learned recently that, you will excuse the term, the availability of battery storage has exploded over the last three years.

Mr. DANLY. Please don't use that term.

[Laughter.]

Senator KING. Sorry. It has expanded dramatically, how is that?

And would you agree that this is an important area, because solar and wind today are the cheapest forms of energy, about three cents a kilowatt-hour all-in, compared with other sources. Combined cycle is three and a half cents, but other sources are much more. And they are also the fastest to the market. So I hope that you agree that storage is an important area of research and development in order to expand capacity on the grid from all sources.

Mr. DANLY. Absolutely. Research into storage is, like all research, incremental, but the change in the effectiveness of batteries, the rate of discharge, and the total capacity availability has

increased over time. If we could solve the technical, engineering, and cost elements to storage, that's not just a matter of allowing intermittent resources to have more continuous output, it also allows for the delivery of services to the bulk power system that otherwise would have to be provided directly by generation, and could solve any number of transmission constraints that right now we have to have generators for.

Senator KING. Exactly. It could be a peaker. It could have all kinds of roles on stabilizing the grid.

Mr. DANLY. Yeah, it could provide ancillary services that just because of the geography and the topology of the system would otherwise only be fixed by putting in, let's say, a combustion turbine or something like that.

Senator KING. Well, the Department is working on a number of initiatives at NREL and other places on battery development and technology. So I hope you will be a cheerleader for that when you get to the Department.

Mr. DANLY. Should I be lucky enough to be confirmed, I will cheerlead the national labs and I am completely behind the idea of trying to figure out the storage question.

Senator KING. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you.

Any other questions on this side? Then I am just going to proceed to mine.

But congratulations to both of you. Thank you so much for taking the time to visit with me. Let me start with Ms. MacGregor.

The Biden Administration's Bureau of Land Management finalized what was the Rock Springs Resource Management Plan. They did it on the way out the door, December 2024. It occurred not even a week after our Governor, Governor Mark Gordon, submitted his appeal to the proposed plan. The final plan is going to devastate the people of Southwest Wyoming and lock up millions of acres of land that the local communities and the entire state rely upon. The Governor, the state legislature, the county commissioners, and the local communities all strongly oppose this plan that came out in the final days of the Biden Administration. Will you commit to work with my office and the state to undo this disastrous plan?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Sir, I am very familiar with that plan, and I want to say that the law itself has a really important consistency review that is required to be conducted by the BLM. And it concerns me when you have a resource management plan that you work on for years and your ultimate result is something that ends up inconsistent with what the state would like. I think that's something we can absolutely work with you on.

Senator BARRASSO. So in terms of before implementing the Biden Administration's flawed plan, you are going to continue to work with us?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Absolutely.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you.

The Resource Management Plan for Buffalo, Wyoming—the Biden Administration finalized a Resource Management Plan for the Buffalo, Wyoming Field Office that is going to ban new coal leasing in the Powder River Basin, the most energy-rich area in the

country. This short-sighted decision is an insult to Wyoming communities and harmful to American energy security. If confirmed, would you work with me to reverse this plan?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Sir, yes, I will work with you on that plan as well.

Senator BARRASSO. On oil and gas leases, the previous Administration, I believe, had a disgraceful record on oil and gas management. President Biden blocked production at every turn, deferred over 600,000 acres from leasing in Wyoming that were previously cleared for oil and gas production. Glad to see there is already a lease sale in Wyoming this year. I think it needs to continue. If confirmed, will you work to offer additional acres for leasing?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Sir, conducting lease sales is a requirement of the law. I will obey the law and we will issue lease sales.

Senator BARRASSO. Great.

In terms of sage-grouse, Wyoming is home to a large population of the greater sage-grouse and its habitat. For over 15 years, Wyoming has been at the forefront of adopting new management approaches to protect the species. Our state has led successful efforts to balance conservation with economic development. The Biden Administration proposed to designate over 600,000 acres in Wyoming as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, also known as ACECs. That is going to lock up thousands of acres in Wyoming, halting production and development across the state. Would you be willing to reopen the Department's greater sage-grouse management?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Sir, we worked on the sage-grouse resource management plan in the last Administration, and I was interested to learn that this issue is remaining and needs to be addressed and we will work with you on it.

Senator BARRASSO. Great.

In terms of federal grazing, the Department of the Interior plays a critical role in managing federal lands across the West. Almost half of the land in Wyoming is owned by the Federal Government. Land managed under multiple use is required to be managed without impairment of the productivity of the land. These are public places that people from Wyoming depend upon accessing for their livelihoods. Congress directed grazing, timber harvesting, recreation, as well as energy and mineral development to take place on these lands. Will you support the multiple-use mandate of federal lands?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Absolutely, sir, that is the law.

Senator BARRASSO. With regard to the Colorado River Basin, the Colorado River flows through seven states, and the Upper Basin includes Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah. We need short- and long-term solutions that provide Westerners the water that we need. More water storage, improved federal flexibility, better data, and improved forecasting can help accomplish these goals. What do you think is the role of the Department in these negotiations between the Colorado River Basins, which is currently ongoing?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Sir, it sounds like I will be spending a lot of time in Wyoming.

Senator BARRASSO. We appreciate it. We would love to have you.

Ms. MACGREGOR. I think the role of the Department is ensuring that we have a responsible solution that provides for the 40 million

people who rely upon that water, but the solution must be state-based.

Senator BARRASSO. Okay.

With regard to the grizzly bear, the grizzly bear is fully recovered. The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem population of grizzly bear has been fully recovered for 20 years. Wyoming is proud of the role that we played in leading the recovery. The population has been delisted two times, under both Democrat and Republican administrations. It has been relisted by a federal judge. The only thing that Presidents Biden, Obama, Trump, and Bush all agreed on is that the grizzly bear is fully recovered. But we have federal judges who are taking a different approach. The Endangered Species Act was passed by Congress to protect species from extinction. Does it make sense for the Federal Government to manage and waste taxpayer dollars on a species that is in no danger of becoming extinct?

Ms. MACGREGOR. Sir, I believe we are borrowing some great talent from the State of Wyoming to assist us on a lot of these issues, especially as it relates to the grizzly bear and the science behind that decision.

Senator BARRASSO. Great.

Mr. Danly, congratulations to you as well. Let's talk about Advanced Reactor Demonstration Projects—nuclear energy. Developing first-of-its-kind technology requires time and resources. This is especially true for nuclear energy. The Department of Energy's Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program is meant to help developers overcome these hurdles. It is work that had begun in earnest during the first Trump Administration. The program was signed into law by President Trump. I look forward to continuing this good work in getting the current projects over the finish line. If confirmed, will you ensure the Department of Energy remains committed to this mission?

Mr. DANLY. Both the President and the Secretary have expressed their enthusiasm for next-gen reactors. I think they are almost certainly going to be part of any solution we have to meeting power demand. I have every intention of supporting the program and working with you on it.

Senator BARRASSO. Great.

So Russian uranium—last year, Congress passed legislation to ban imports of Russian uranium into the United States. The law is intended to revive American uranium production and strengthen our nuclear fuel supply chain. This is needed to reliably supply critical baseload power plants. The legislation must be implemented correctly. The Department of Energy has the discretion to provide waivers to companies seeking to import uranium from Russia. Do you agree that waivers should be used only as a last resort?

Mr. DANLY. We need to remove our reliance for uranium on other countries. It is very difficult to have affordable, reliable, and secure energy if the fundamental inputs are in the hands of either adversarial or even hostile nations. And I absolutely agree that the waivers are designed only for use in extremis, when you have to have the fuel.

Senator BARRASSO. All right, because we are now seeing that sales of nuclear material are coming from China.

Mr. DANLY. Which are coming from Russia.

Senator BARRASSO. Which are coming from Russia, exactly. I am glad you know, because the first Trump Administration recognized our dependence on uranium imports to fuel our nuclear reactors as a national security risk. It convened the Nuclear Fuel Working Group to develop recommendations to address the issue. As an extension of the work, in 2023, Congress passed the Nuclear Fuel Security Act to rebuild our nation's nuclear fuel supply chain. Congress repurposed \$2.72 billion in 2024 to support this goal. If confirmed, will you make it a priority to build and secure our nuclear fuel supply chain, including enrichment and conversion?

Mr. DANLY. Senator, the entire supply chain from beginning to end for nuclear power has to be absolutely resilient and redundant within the United States. And the Department of Energy would not be fully discharging its functions if it didn't work on that.

Senator BARRASSO. Before ending this hearing, any other questions?

[No response.]

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you.

So for the record, I will ask three questions addressed to each nominee before the Committee. Will you be available to appear before the Committee and other Congressional Committees to represent Departmental positions and respond to issues of concern to Congress?

Mr. DANLY. I will.

Ms. MACGREGOR. I will.

Senator BARRASSO. Are you aware of any personal holdings, investments, or interests that could constitute a conflict or create the appearance of such a conflict, should you be confirmed and assume the office to which you have been nominated by the President?

Mr. DANLY. I am aware of no conflicts.

Ms. MACGREGOR. Sir, aside from the ones I disclosed that I discussed and will divest, no, there will be no conflicts.

Senator BARRASSO. Great.

Are you involved in or do you have any assets held in blind trusts?

Mr. DANLY. No.

Ms. MACGREGOR. No.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you.

I want to thank the witnesses and congratulate you. Thank you for your testimony.

All Senators, I thank. We had a very good turnout for the questioning today.

Questions for the record of the hearings are due by 6:00 p.m. this evening.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:12 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX MATERIAL SUBMITTED

Questions for the Record
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Hearing on the Nomination of Katharine MacGregor
to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior
April 2, 2025

Questions from Ranking Member Martin Heinrich

Question 1: The United States' relationships with the Freely Associated States—the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau—are vital strategic assets in countering the Chinese government's growing influence in the Pacific region. In recognition of this, Congress approved funding to implement the Compacts of Free Association over the next 20 years, placing the Department of the Interior in a crucial oversight role.

- Will you commit to upholding the law in the implementation of the bipartisan Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2024?

Response: Yes, if confirmed I commit to complying with the law. I understand the long-standing relationship the United States has with the Freely Associated States and that the Department plays an important role in promoting a strong, mutually beneficial partnership with each of these sovereign Pacific Island nations.

- Given the Administration's plans to reduce the federal workforce, will you ensure that the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau do not suffer disproportionate or adverse impacts as the Department implements the Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2024?

Response: President Trump is committed to making the federal government more efficient and more accountable. If I am confirmed, my role will be to ensure that we meet our mission and implement President Trump's agenda in accordance with the laws passed by Congress.

- How will you guarantee that any workforce reductions do not undermine U.S. national security interests in the Indo-Pacific?

Response: Protecting the security of the American people and American interests is a central role of the Federal government and one that I take very seriously. If I am confirmed, I will ensure that the Department works closely with the State Department and other agencies on strategic goals in the Indo-Pacific.

Question 2: As the science arm of the Interior Department, the U.S. Geological Survey provides critical data to safeguard resources, protect communities from natural disasters, and ensure policies are driven by facts, not politics. The DOGE's termination of over 30 USGS site leases—mainly affecting the Water Resources Mission Area and Water Science Centers—threatens real-time monitoring of floods, droughts, and water quality. This directly impacts public safety and water managers' ability to make informed decisions.

- Given these disruptions to mission-critical work, what is your plan to provide USGS scientists with the necessary facilities to continue their science and research without interruption?

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- How will you ensure that decisions like this one do not compromise the quality and credibility of USGS science?

Response: As I have not been in the building, I have not been briefed on the status of USGS facilities and personnel. If I am confirmed, I will be briefed on this ongoing matter and be prepared for further discussion. I will follow the law to ensure the important work at the USGS continues efficiently.

Question 3: Since 1980, Congress has authorized the Bureau of Reclamation's Rural Water Program to develop municipal and industrial water supply projects in rural areas and on Tribal lands. In this current fiscal year, the Bureau of Reclamation allocated funding to five rural water projects in South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana and New Mexico. A rural water project in New Mexico, the Eastern New Mexico Rural Water System, is critical to sustaining a potable water system for Eastern New Mexico communities and Cannon Air Force Base. This project is counting on existing Bureau of Reclamation contracts and appropriations to match state and local funding and meet loan payment obligations by 2030.

- Will you commit to honor the Eastern New Mexico Rural Water System project contracts that obligate the Bureau of Reclamation to provide the federal matching dollars towards the project's completion?

Response: I understand the importance and challenges of providing reliable water supplies for rural and tribal communities. If confirmed, look forward to working with you and your colleagues on this issue.

Question 4: Will you commit that funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will continue to be made available for projects and activities associated with water conservation and drought mitigation to help address the growing uncertainty and risk related to available water supplies across the Western United States?

Question 5: Will you commit to uphold the funding that has been under contract or obligated by the Bureau of Reclamation for projects in the Colorado River Basin from the Inflation Reduction Act?

Question 6: Will you commit to uphold the funding that has been awarded by the Bureau of Reclamation for projects in the Colorado River Basin from the Inflation Reduction Act?

Response to questions 4, 5 and 6: I am not at the Department and not aware of details of the specific funding concerns you have raised. As I stated in my hearing, I know the Colorado River provides water to more than 40 million people and that the Department play an important role. If confirmed, I commit to looking into these questions, and I will be happy to continue the discussion.

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Questions from Senator Ron Wyden

Question 1: We treasure our coastline in Oregon and have long opposed irresponsible development no matter the type. Will you work with me to ensure that local opposition to offshore oil drilling is respected and lease sales are not offered off the West Coast ?

Response: Input from local communities, Tribes, and governors is an important part of the offshore planning process. If I am confirmed, I commit to work with you on this and other issues of importance to your office.

Question 2: Will you ensure values like drinking water and recreation get the same attention as extractive uses when the Interior is managing public lands?

Response: Congress has directed the Department to manage its public lands under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield, ranging from energy development, livestock grazing, mining, watershed protection, hunting, fishing, and other forms of recreation. If confirmed I will follow the law in the management and use of our nation's public lands and the values you have mentioned will receive full consideration.

Question 3: There is strong local support for Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in Oregon. Will you honor that local support promise not to diminish the boundary of the designated area?

Response: Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument was established, and later expanded, by presidential proclamation under the Antiquities Act of 1906. As I mentioned during the hearing, decisions on establishing, revising, or revoking national monuments under the Antiquities Act are delegated solely to the President of the United States. If the President makes a decision on this or any other national monument, I commit to following all applicable laws.

Question 4: I feel strongly that divesting from public lands is a huge mistake. Do you agree that maintaining these lands in public ownership with limited exceptions for the benefit of all Americans is the best public policy?

Response: Ultimately, Congress has already provided the Department of the Interior with several legal authorities when considering the sale of multiple-use lands. One example, the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA), has proven to be an incredible lawful tool provided by Congress to ensure public land availability for important public purposes, including housing, while also generating billions of dollars that have benefited education, conservation, and important water facilities in the State of Nevada. If confirmed, I will follow all applicable laws related to this matter.

Question 5: Wildfire risk on public lands is driven in large part by low value hazardous fuels that have not been removed because it is not commercially viable to do so without added

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incentive. How will you ensure this work is prioritized and not forgotten in favor of commercial timber sales that may not result in the same wildfire risk reduction and forest restoration benefits to nearby communities and other users?

Response: As we discussed at the hearing, we are in agreement on the need to reduce hazardous fuels. The consequences of wildland fire are devastating. It is critical that the Department's land managers utilize all the tools in the toolbox to address wildfire risk, including reducing fuel loads and promoting active range and forest management, including those you mentioned in the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 and the many additional efficiencies that we discussed in our meeting. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department works closely with interagency, state, tribal, and local partners to prevent, respond to, and recover from, wildland fires.

Questions from Senator Maria Cantwell

Question 1: National Park Service Staffing

Ms. MacGregor, in February 2025, the administration fired approximately 1,000 National Park Service employees across the country. As a result of the administration's staffing reductions, the Park Service lost 9% of its staff in a matter of weeks. In Washington state, at least 31 probationary employees were fired.

- Will these significant indiscriminate firings of our federal public lands workers result in overgrown, unmanaged, and inaccessible trails?
- Will you commit to ensuring that the National Park Service has sufficient staffing, on par with at least fiscal year 2023 staffing numbers, to operate the parks and ensure a positive visitor experience?

Response: As I am not currently employed by the federal government, I have not had the opportunity to be briefed on the status of National Park Service personnel. I have worked with and appreciate the contributions of the men and women who maintain our national parks and public lands across the nation. If I am confirmed, I commit to ensuring that decisions made by the Department comply with the law as we implement President Trump's policy objectives.

Question 2: NPS Seasonal Employees

Ms. MacGregor, in January 2025, the Trump Administration announced a hiring freeze for all federal employees, meaning that vacant positions—like seasonal park staff—cannot be filled. Our national parks rely on seasonal employees to bear the burden of deferred maintenance work.

- If seasonal staff can't be hired in time, are you concerned that some park services could be limited, and emergency response times will increase?
- If seasonal staff can't be hired in time, are you concerned we could see a spike in maintenance needs, trash collection issues, and more and negatively impact visitor experience?

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- What will you do, as Deputy Secretary, to ensure that the seasonal park staff are hired and onboarded in a timely manner, ahead of the recreation season?

Response: If I am confirmed, I commit to working with you on staffing at the Department to make sure we have what we need to ensure the government works efficiently for the American people.

Question 3: Outdoor Recreation

Ms. MacGregor, nearly 20% of land in the United States is managed by the Department of Interior and a significant amount is used for outdoor recreation, which is a major economic driver, especially in Washington state. Outdoor recreation generates \$1.2 trillion in economic output every year and accounts for 5 million jobs.

Many rural gateway communities that depend on outdoor access and recreation—whether from hotels, restaurants, outfitters, guides, or tour operators—to carry their economy.

- Will you support efforts to protect more public lands and waters through designations such as wild and scenic designations -- that will support the outdoor recreation economy and create jobs in gateway communities?
- What will you do, as Deputy Secretary, to ensure that gateway communities and their outdoor recreation economies are not negatively impacted by DOGE and the administration's policies at the Interior Department?

Response: I firmly believe that access to our nation's public lands for recreational activities is one of the greatest stewardship services that Interior provides for the American people — especially given that outdoor recreation has a direct health benefit. As just one of the millions of people who visit our parks, public lands, and waters regularly to recreate, I also fully understand the importance of the local economies who ultimately support an enhanced visitor experience. If confirmed, I will look for ways to enhance public access to federal lands which will benefit local and state economies.

Question 4: Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

Ms. MacGregor, the Great American Outdoors Act ensured that historic promise of LWCF's funding — which comes from the royalties paid into the U.S. Treasury from oil and gas drilling in the Outer Continental Shelf, not from taxpayer dollars — is allocated to priorities at the state and local level as well as to protecting our National Parks, Wildlife Refuge and other public lands in a locally-driven, bottom-up process according to where there is most need, urgency, and opportunity to work with willing landowners to protect the best of this country. It is highly competitive and projects always garner broad support in order to succeed.

- Do you agree that the LWCF has a long track record of empowering communities, creating more access for hunting, fishing, and recreation, and driving successful conservation outcomes?
- How do you view LWCF as a tool to maximize recreation and sportsmen opportunities and improve federal land management?

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- Will you commit to continuing to support full use of the annual \$900 million of mandatory spending for the LWCF?

Response: Since its enactment in 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has provided funds to federal, state, and local governments for the acquisition of interests in land and water for recreation and conservation purposes and has created opportunities that strengthened the health and vitality of Americans through recreational access, including hunting and fishing. Funding for the LWCF comes mainly from receipts from offshore oil and gas development on the Outer Continental Shelf. In 2020, President Trump signed the Great American Outdoors Act, providing for mandatory funding from the LWCF at \$900 million annually. The LWCF has been used to expand opportunities for hunting and fishing, among other recreational activities. If confirmed, I will commit to implementing the law as enacted by Congress.

Question 5: Great American Outdoors Act

Ms. MacGregor, under the first Trump administration, Congress passed the largest investment in public lands in US history—the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA). Unfortunately, critical conservation funding authorized through GAOA expires at the conclusion of fiscal year 2025. GAOA is a critical tool to address the decades-old maintenance backlog on public lands.

- Do I have your commitment to work with interested Energy and Natural Resources Committee members to push for reauthorization of the GAOA before it expires?

Planned Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) projects likely cannot happen without the federal staff to do the work. These federal awards go to essential public lands projects, completed largely with the help of private contractors who are hired to do the work. Since many of these federal funding awards have already been announced—and in some cases, already broken ground—these contractors likely already have agreements with the federal agencies to complete these projects.

- Will you commit to releasing all the awarded and obligated GAOA funds, that have yet to be dispersed, in a timely manner?

Response: President Trump signed the Great American Outdoors Act into law in 2020, and I was proud to have played a part in its passage. As I mentioned at my hearing, if confirmed, I have a lot to learn about the further implementation of this law, as I understand that the Department's current maintenance backlog has increased significantly, rather than being reduced as contemplated by the law. If I am confirmed, I will learn more about the current status of the program and commit to working with you and to comply with the law.

Question 6: Tribal Trust and Treaty Obligation

Ms. MacGregor, in Washington state our tribal nations' treaty rights are sacrosanct. Please provide separate answers for each of the following questions:

- Do you commit to upholding the United States' treaty responsibilities to tribal nations?

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- What are your plans to ensure that the United States lives up to its trust responsibilities to tribal nations?
- If confirmed, what specific steps will you take to ensure that Tribal consultation is a meaningful and enforceable process, rather than a box checking formality?
- If confirmed, will you commit to working with Tribes on a government-to-government basis, engaging in meaningful Tribal consultation on federal policies that impact them, and honoring Tribal sovereignty?

Response: I am grateful to have had the opportunity to engage with Tribes while previously at the Department and believe that tribal input is important. If I am confirmed, I commit to upholding the United States' treaty responsibilities, consistent with the Department's legal authorities. I agree with Secretary Burgum that Tribes are often in the best position to explain how their needs can be met, and so if confirmed, I will work with Tribes and consult with them to address issues that impact them.

- In the 118th Congress, several bills were introduced that would ratify tribal water rights settlements. What would be your criteria for evaluating and making recommendations to the Administration on proposed tribal water rights settlements?

Response: Tribal water rights settlements can help provide water supply certainty to tribal and non-tribal water users and resolve claims among many parties. I understand the importance of this critical resource and look forward to working with you on this important issue.

- Will you commit to improving the implementation and enforcement of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and the protection of Tribal cultural heritage from looting, destruction, trafficking, and exploitation pursuant to federal law?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to working with the Department of Justice as appropriate in their prosecution of criminal violations of the NAGPRA.

- In 2021, the Department launched the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. Since then, the Department has held listening sessions across the country and produced two volumes of findings. If confirmed, will you commit to working with Tribes and advocates to continuing this work, including advocating for additional funding in the President's budget and supporting federal legislation?

Response: I am aware of the findings of this initiative. If confirmed, I commit to working with you on this issue.

Question 7: Tribal Public Safety

Ms. MacGregor, public safety remains one of the most pressing issues facing Tribes throughout the country, the needs range from the need for more officers, detention, and judges.

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- Can you commit that you will work with the Administration to address this need in the President's Budget and by removing red tape facing our Tribal law enforcement agencies?
- Do you support the Tribal Law Enforcement Parity Act that will allow Tribes to recruit and retain more Tribal law enforcement officers?
- If confirmed, what steps would you take to improve public safety on Tribal lands, particularly as it relates to the Department of the Interior's collaboration with the Department of Justice?
- If confirmed, what specific steps will you take to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples, particularly as it concerns improve interagency coordination on public safety and those agencies' investigative capacity to ensure Tribal and BIA law enforcement have the resources and support they need?

Response: As I mentioned at the hearing, I was proud to work on President Trump's initiative to address missing and murdered Native American and Alaska Native women and proud that several of the cold case offices we established have solved a number of cases. But there remains much to be done. If confirmed, I will better my understanding of these challenges and work with the Secretary and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to develop solutions that prioritize public safety.

Question 8: Tribal Fee-to-Trust Process

Ms. MacGregor, do you plan to take any actions that would change the fee-to-trust process for tribal nations?

- Will you commit to continuing to process fee-to-trust applications?

Response: If confirmed, I will share the Secretary's commitment to continue processing fee-to-trust applications in accordance with all applicable law.

Question 9: Manhattan Project National Historical Park

Ms. MacGregor, Congress established the Manhattan Project National Historical Park in the Fiscal Year 2015 National Defense Authorization Act. This park is a unique partnership between the Department of Energy, which manages the facilities and controls access, and the National Park Service (NPS), which leads the interpretation. The park is also unique because it is located at three sites in three different states, including at Hanford in Washington state.

Since the inception of the park almost ten years ago, there has been an intentional effort by NPS, DOE, and the communities to work closely together across the three sites, and to avoid any appearance of preferential treatment towards any particular site. That was part of the rationale for locating the park superintendent in a neutral location, Denver. Recently the communities were informed on very short notice by NPS that the agency is planning on relocating the superintendent position to Santa Fe, in close proximity to the Los Alamos unit of the park. That decision has not been finalized yet, however.

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- Would you please share your thoughts on Interior and the National Parks Service's role in supporting the Manhattan Project National Historical Park?

I have significant concerns that NPS did not discuss this potentially significant change with any of the communities beforehand. The communities near the Hanford and Oak Ridge units of the park have sent letters to the NPS Intermountain Regional Director asking for further discussion before any decisions are made.

- Do I have your commitment that you will look into this issue, and not make any final decisions before the key community stakeholders at all three sites have had the opportunity to learn more about this proposed change, and to provide their input to NPS?

Response: While I am not familiar with the specific issue you raise, I am familiar with the important role the Manhattan Project National Historic Park plays in ensuring our long term understanding of that endeavor and that important time in our nation's strong history. I strongly value local input, and as I stated at my hearing, local involvement is embedded in almost all of the statutes that guide us at the Department. If I am confirmed, I will work to better understand your concerns governing the park's management.

Question 10: Offshore Energy

Ms. MacGregor, I am concerned this Administration's single-minded pursuit of oil and gas development above all else could hurt the outdoor recreation industry. This includes concerns that some decisions will come at the expense of hard-won federal designations that protect our most irreplaceable federal lands and waters.

Protecting our shorelines is also vitally important to a coastal state like mine. An oil spill off our beloved coastline could not only cause terrible environmental damage, but it would also threaten Washington's maritime industry that supports over 174,000 jobs and more than \$45 billion in annual revenue.

- Do you support offshore oil and gas drilling in federal waters off the coast of Washington state or the Western United States?

Response: While I do not agree with the characterization of "single-minded pursuit of oil and gas development above all else," I do understand the importance of the recreation economy to your state. The President has set a policy of encouraging energy exploration and production on federal lands and waters, including on the Outer Continental Shelf, in order to meet the needs of Americans, reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy, and solidify the United States as a global energy leader. If confirmed, I will follow the law to support responsible energy development to meet our nation's energy needs.

Question 11: Wind Energy

Ms. MacGregor, all domestic energy sources, including wind, will be key to meeting upcoming rising energy demand needs.

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- Will you support a timely conclusion of the review of Federal wind leasing and permitting directed by the Presidential Memo that halts all Federal permitting of wind energy, even on private land, until that review is finished?

Response: If I am confirmed, I will comply with President Trump's directives to meet the energy emergency in accordance with law.

Question 12: Western Water

Ms. MacGregor, Western water policy is going to be one of the most important and challenging issues you will face. In the state of Washington, we have unique water challenges in experiencing extreme flooding in the western half of the state and managing annual droughts that exacerbate water supply for our farmers in the eastern portion of the state. We also generate 60% of our energy from hydropower.

How we manage water is critical and a key to success is working collaboratively with the Bureau of Reclamation and developing consensus from the ground up with communities and water users.

- If confirmed, will you support ground-up, consensus-driven solutions to water management?
- Will you support the development and implementation of technology, like Water A.I., that can better manage water supply, storage and use?

Response: As I said at the hearing, communities across the West depend on getting water policy right. I agree with the Secretary that community-driven consensus is one of the best ways to achieve water supply certainty and that technological innovation can be an important tool.

The Yakima Basin Integrated Plan is a basin wide water project that focuses on balancing and fulfilling the needs of a robust agricultural sector, flood risk management, and salmon recovery. It's vital the Bureau of Reclamation continues to fund these projects.

- If confirmed, will you work to promote the need for water projects, like the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan and other irrigation and water conservation projects, to be considered in any infrastructure legislation?
- Will you commit to including funding for the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan in the Department of Interior's proposed budget?

Response: If I am confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan and the needs in the Yakima Basin and to working with you and your colleagues on any potential legislation to address the issues you raise.

Question 13: Fixed Climbing Anchors

Ms. MacGregor, the issue of access to wilderness areas in my state is very important, at places like the Enchantments and North Cascades National Park. The last administration proposed

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controversial policies that would prohibit the use of fixed anchors, a standard climbing safety practice, for rock climbing and mountaineering.

- How do you plan to go forward with the climbing policies that are now required by the EXPLORE Act and can you give me assurances that access to my state's iconic wilderness areas won't be restricted for rock climbers and mountaineers?

Response: The EXPLORE Act recognizes the importance of outdoor recreation on public lands to our economy and to our livelihoods. I share this view and support recreational activities on public lands, including rock climbing. If confirmed, I will ensure the EXPLORE Act is implemented as directed by Congress, consistent with Administration priorities.

Question 14: Federal Landscapes

Ms. MacGregor, under the first Trump administration, Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante national monuments were dramatically reduced—the protected area was cut down by 85%. These are sacred sites and culturally important lands to tribes in the region. Despite overwhelming support to keep these areas protected, the first Trump administration attempted to roll back protections to allow mining and oil and gas development. President Biden restored full protections to Bears Ears, Grand Staircase Escalante, as well as other monuments that were stripped of protection by the Trump Administration.

- In areas like Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante National Monuments, do you believe the value of the cultural resources, such as sacred sites, and outdoor recreation opportunities these monuments protect outweighs their prospective value from resource extraction?
- Will you commit to honoring and upholding protections for our existing national monuments?

Response: Decisions on establishing, revising, or revoking national monuments under the Antiquities Act of 1906 are delegated solely to the President of the United States. If the President makes a decision on this or any other national monument, I will follow all applicable laws.

Question 15: Protecting Public Lands in Alaska

Ms. MacGregor, I have worked to maintain unique and irreplaceable federal lands in Alaska like the Tongass, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and Bristol Bay, home to the world's largest sockeye salmon run. There have always been development pressures, but what we proved is the relatively small short-term economic returns are not worth hurting places that are like nowhere else in the world, and in the case of Bristol Bay, support a multitude of good fishing jobs.

I bring this up because I know you will be pressed on issues impacting Alaska. I hope you will consider in each case whether short-term and limited economic gains from a resource extraction project outweighs the long-term impacts to developing these areas.

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For example, the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act mandated two lease sales in the Arctic Refuge. The Congressional Budget Office projected the oil and gas leasing program would yield \$2.2 billion. However, both lease sales produced little to no bidding interest and thus revenue. In the first lease sale held during the first Trump Administration, no major oil companies showed up to bid. And the sale generated a mere \$12 million — less than 1% of the total revenue that was projected. The second lease sale held last week was also a complete dud; not a single company bid — big or small. It appears that the private sector realizes that the economics don't support drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

- Given the last two auctions, do you think new lease sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would result in meaningful private sector interest or substantial revenues?
- If so, why do you believe an additional lease sale would be different than the past two sales?
- Are you aware of the different positions within the Alaska Native community regarding oil and gas development on the Arctic Refuge?
- Will you commit to meeting with all Tribal stakeholders before taking any actions in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

Response: In 2017, Congress was clear in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that the Secretary was to implement an oil and gas leasing program in the Coastal Plain. In 2025, President Trump and Secretary Burgum have issued orders to ensure that the Administration is efficiently and effectively maximizing the development and production of the natural resources located in Alaska. If I am confirmed, I will review recent Departmental actions to implement the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act to ensure compliance with law.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is home to one of the most threatened populations of polar bears in the world: the Southern Beaufort Sea population. The Department of the Interior recently announced that it plans to open up the entire Coastal Plain for oil and gas exploration. Polar bear experts, including those within the department, have said that oil and gas leasing, exploration, and development on the Coastal Plain would irreversibly and significantly harm the Coastal Plain's polar bear population. The impacts from seismic exploration alone can cause death and serious injury to denning bears and cubs.

- Are you aware that experts say there is a potential that polar bear deaths caused by oil and gas development on the Coastal Plain could have population-level impacts to the Southern Beaufort Sea population?
- If confirmed, how will you ensure that the Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the Arctic Refuge and threatened polar bears, can fulfill their mission to “to conserve, protect, and enhance... wildlife ... and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people” within the context of the Department's drive to open up all critical polar bear denning habitat to oil and gas development?

Response: Congress has been clear in its directive that the Secretary must implement an oil and gas leasing program in the Coastal Plain. If confirmed, I commit to following the law.

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Question 16: National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska

Ms. MacGregor, The Western Arctic region in Alaska is also a vast one-of-a-kind place with immense oil and gas development pressure. The Western Arctic is a critical carbon sink, premiere tourist destination, contains unparalleled wildlife habitat, and has been home to Indigenous traditions for countless generations. The Department of the Interior recently released a report and guidance that conclude that there cannot be development in the Western Arctic without harm to caribou and other key species, and it names subsistence as a “significant resource value” for the reserve that any development would jeopardize.

- Do you support Tribal subsistence uses of the Western Arctic, including the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A)?
- Are you aware of the different positions within the Alaska Native community regarding oil and gas development on the NPR-A?
- Do you commit to ensuring that Tribal subsistence uses of NPR-A, including caribou are not jeopardized?

Response: I agree with Secretary Burgum that energy production is and will continue to be compatible with Alaska Native subsistence uses.

Question 17: OPEC

Ms. MacGregor, I believe we need to face the reality and be honest that there’s no way we can drill our way to full petroleum energy independence or dominance. Not as long as the OPEC+ cartel can manipulate world supply and hold great sway over our pump prices. Even though we are the world’s largest oil producer, we do not control the vast reserves that other OPEC+ nations do, nor the globally-set price of crude. But we do now at least have alternative fuels. The driver filling up their car with electricity pays just a fraction of what they would pay at a gas station. An Energy Department study found that Washington state EV drivers would save around \$11,000 in fuel costs. Only by finally ending our dependence on fossil fuel can we permanently secure America’s national security, maintain affordable energy prices, and tackle the climate crisis.

- Do you agree that OPEC+ has proven and technically recoverable reserves that greatly outnumber U.S.-controlled reserves?
- Do you agree that the price of crude oil is set on international markets like ICE that respond to the global supply and production of crude oil?
- Do you agree that the above two factors ultimately limits the ability of the U.S. to influence prices when OPEC+ can ramp up and down production as the dominant market supplier?
- Do you agree that the interests of OPEC+ countries like Russia and Iran do not align with our national interest?
- What level of increase in U.S. oil production do you think would meaningfully impact the price of oil and reduce U.S. petroleum prices? Do you believe this will this reduction result in meeting President Trump’s campaign promise to reduce gasoline pump prices to \$2 per gallon?

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- Do you support the trend of domestic oil producers to hold back on additional development and not overextend their assets and balance sheets in order to keep the price of oil at a stable and elevated price?
- If confirmed, how will you help the Interior Department bring affordable fossil fuel alternatives to market?

Response: In accordance with the Executive Order, Secretary Burgum is working with the National Energy Dominance Council to provide recommendations to the President to ensure that the Administration takes appropriate steps to make America energy dominant. I support the goals of the President and the Secretary to expand all forms of reliable and affordable energy production to address the critical domestic and security needs of the nation. What is clear to me based upon recent energy consumption data that is consistently made publicly available by the Energy Information Administration, our nation's citizens rely upon many forms of domestic energy generation/production in their daily lives, a significant portion of which are fossil energy resources. It is my belief that we cannot ignore that fact when working to help meet their energy needs.

Question 18: Unused Oil & Gas Leases

Ms. MacGregor, according to the latest Interior Department data there are over 10 million acres of existing onshore oil and gas leases that have been stockpiled, but are not producing, and there are almost 7,000 approved and available but unused permits to drill on those federal onshore leases.

- Why do you think these leases are not being used to apply for permits to drill?
- Why do you think these permits are not being actually used to drill for more oil and gas?
- The size of these unused lands are about the same as Rhode Island, Delaware, Connecticut, and Hawaii combined, do you think it's reasonable for these public lands to be off limits and unused for years at a time?
- Do you believe the Department of Interior should take a hard look this vast amount of public land being locked-up in unused federal oil and gas leases and consider supporting policies that would relinquish those unused leases if they are impeding other public uses of our federal lands and waters such as hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation?

Response: I do not believe that industry is stockpiling onshore oil and gas leases and APDs, or that oil and gas leases "lock up" federal lands. Onshore oil and gas leases involve significant financial commitment and a lengthy multi-step development process that relies heavily on substantive permitting, science, and engineering to ultimately achieve production in commercial quantities. Moreover, production from these leases generates important revenue that is shared with the States in which the energy is produced, and funds important initiatives such as education, public services, and the Reclamation Fund. These leases come with a time limitation, which ensures timely production or forfeiture. Furthermore, because oil and gas leases generally do not convey the entire surface estate, the BLM still manages the surface and may authorize other multiple-use activities

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concurrent with energy production from the subsurface. I agree with Secretary Burgum that a vibrant energy economy is the best outcome for the American people.

Questions from Senator Mazie Hirono

Question 1: At the end of January President Trump fired numerous Inspectors General, including IG Greenblatt at the Department of the Interior. It is estimated that in FY 2023, OIGs saved \$93.1 billion in taxpayer dollars, while its budget was \$3.5 billion—equating to \$26 saved for every dollar spent. The Inspectors General are trained experts in combatting waste, fraud, and abuse to serve the American public and protect taxpayer dollars. They are not political appointees to serve the whims of a President or Cabinet Secretaries. Do you believe that Inspectors General should be nonpolitical? Is their work important to the functioning of the Department?

Response: The Department of the Interior Office of the Inspector General conducts audits, investigations, and inspections to prevent and detect waste, fraud, and abuse. During my time at the Department, I worked with the OIG on issues of interest at the Department and appreciated the insights provided by the OIG. If I am confirmed, I will again work with the OIG's office on Departmental issues and look forward to doing so.

Question 2: The National Park Service Organic Act requires National Park Service units to be managed "unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations," while the Federal Lands Policy Management Act (FLPMA) directs BLM to prevent "unnecessary or undue degradation." How do you plan to balance these responsibilities with the President's directive to expand mining on public lands?

Response: The importance of ensuring a strong domestic mining capability in our nation cannot be understated. We have seen firsthand as foreign adversaries have used our dependence on foreign sources of critical minerals to gain leverage over our country, ultimately impacting our citizens. I firmly believe that we can continue to maintain the protections that Congress has directed, while also harnessing the unique geology located within our nation's public lands to ensure an outcome that thoughtfully addresses the long-term needs of the American people.

Question 3: Secretary Burgum's Secretarial Order on "Unleashing American Energy" calls for a review of withdrawn lands to reduce burdens on mining. If this review leads to lifting protections near units of the National Park Service, how will you ensure compliance with the Organic Act's conservation mandate, including the conservation of resources that cross park boundaries, like water? Do you commit to ensuring that the National Park Service has the necessary staff to consult on mining activities near National Park Service units if protections are lifted?

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Response: I am not in a position to speculate on the recommendations that Secretary Burgum submits to the President. I can commit that if I am confirmed, I will comply with applicable law.

Question 4: The Mining in the Parks Act of 1976 prohibited new mine claims in national parks, yet over 600 pre-existing claims remain, according to some estimates. If a claimant within a national park moves forward with mineral exploration, like what is allegedly occurring at Mojave National Preserve, will you ensure the National Park Service fully applies the Organic Act's impairment standard before approving a mine plan of operations? Do you commit to ensuring that the National Park Service has the necessary staff to review and sign off on activities proposed by claimants within units of the National Park Service?

Response: As you note, the Mining in the Parks Act expressly recognizes valid existing rights on mining claims. As I am not currently at the Department, I am not versed in the number or extent of mining claims within National Parks. However, if confirmed, I will commit to following this law and others in their applicability to any valid existing rights.

Question 5: Many national parks, particularly in the arid West, depend on groundwater and surface water sources that extend beyond their boundaries. How will you ensure that mining operations outside of parks do not deplete or contaminate these critical water resources?

Response: If confirmed, I will continue the Department's mandate to ensure any lawfully approved extraction activity operates in accordance with applicable federal laws and regulations.

Question 6: Uranium mining near Grand Canyon National Park, lithium exploration near Death Valley, and rare earth element exploration in Mojave National Preserve all highlight the growing tension between mineral development and park protection. Should economic interests in mining ever outweigh the protection of these special places?

Response: Secretary Burgum has made clear that under his leadership at the Department, there will be a renewed focus on securing American energy dominance and responsible stewardship of our public lands and resources. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that as the Department delivers on the President's agenda to meet our growing energy needs, it does so in a manner that leverages our resources responsibly in accordance with the law.

Question 7: Will you commit to consulting with the National Park Service before recommending any changes to withdrawn lands that could impact units of the National Park Service?

Response: If I am confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the men and women of the National Park Service.

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Questions from Senator Catherine Cortez Masto

Question 1: When you were previously with the Interior Department in the first Trump Administration, you worked on the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and you have spoken publicly about how important that work was to you.

On February 8 of this year, I found out that the Trump administration took the Not Invisible Act Commission Report off of the DOJ website in order to comply with an executive order related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Donald Trump himself signed the Not Invisible Act into law and this report contains valuable recommendations for how to address the MMIW crisis.

If confirmed, will you commit to prioritizing that the directives of the Not Invisible Act continue to be observed, including by working across the Administration to re-post the Not Invisible Act Commission Report on federal websites?

Response: If confirmed, as I mentioned during the hearing, I will continue to support the Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives initiative established under President Trump. I'm not familiar with your concerns regarding the Department of Justice website, but I will work with you to ensure that this issue remains a priority.

Question 2: For years, I have advocated for a state-wide Resource Management Plan (RMP), in order to allow for a comprehensive, science-based approach to holistically manage BLM lands across the state.

Currently, 12 RMPs are in effect, with some completed over 36 years ago. These plans are out of date, impacting BLM's multiple-use management mission across the state.

If confirmed, will you work with the BLM's State Office in Nevada to create a statewide RMP?

Response: I understand the importance of having resource management plans that reflect the current needs of the nation. If confirmed, I will support BLM's review of resource management plans in accordance with law.

Question 3: In February, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum issued Secretarial Order 3418, titled "Unleashing American Energy." This order instructed the Department to conduct a review of national monument designations.

If confirmed, can you commit to respecting the wishes of local communities to preserve these national monuments, including the Avi Kwa Ame National Monument and others in Nevada?

Would you push back against President Trump if he decided to revoke Monument status against the wishes of local stakeholders?

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Response: Decisions on establishing, revising, or revoking national monuments under the Antiquities Act are delegated solely to the President of the United States. If the President makes a decision on this or any other national monument, I will follow all applicable laws.

Question 4: The Department of the Interior (DOI) simply does not have enough staff necessary to carry out all aspects of its missions. Tasks like hazardous fuels management, habitat restoration, and permitting energy projects require a well-trained, experienced, and motivated workforce.

The Trump Administration does not seem to value the work that these employees do. Buyout offers, mass layoffs with short notice, and inconsistent firing and hiring policies have caused mass uncertainty. This confusion and lack of support for employees to perform their duties threatens public safety, economic development, outdoor recreation, and species conservation.

From your perspective, what impacts do these workforce uncertainties pose on public safety, visitor experience, and regional economic impact? If confirmed, will you commit to prioritizing that these critical services and roles are reinstated?

Response: In my previous service at the Department of the Interior, I recognized and appreciated the contributions of many federal employees with whom I worked. I understand the importance of ensuring public safety on our nation's lands and waters. If I am confirmed, I look forward to rejoining many of the stellar career professionals who worked hard to support our priorities and will ensure that we have the resources needed to meet our statutory directives, including wildfire preparedness.

Question 5: I have long supported both legislative and administrative efforts to curb speculative oil and gas leasing on public lands. In Nevada, speculators have nominated tens of millions of acres for leasing, with little results except for greater expense to the taxpayers. Would you agree that some lands should be prioritized for other uses, such as hunting, fishing, grazing, mining, recreation and other uses.?

- How will you ensure that our public lands are managed to reduce speculative oil and gas leasing and other spurious activity taking place on our public lands?
- Would you uphold existing policies and rules that steer leasing away from public lands with no or low potential for development?

Response: Congress has directed the Department to manage public lands under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield, ranging from energy development, livestock grazing, mining, watershed protection, hunting, fishing and other forms of recreation. The BLM has long balanced these multiple uses of our nation's public lands, while also meeting our statutory requirements to conduct quarterly lease sales to ensure the energy needs of the American people are met. If confirmed, I will follow the law in order to achieve the balance of multiple use outlined in our governing statutes.

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Question 6: On March 17, 2025, HUD and the Interior Department announced a Joint Task Force to “identify underutilized federal lands suitable for residential development...and promote policies that increase the availability of affordable housing.” My bill, the Southern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act, does exactly this. It was approved by this committee last year with bipartisan support. It is a community-driven bill with broad bipartisan support from local municipalities, tribes, economic development interests, and conservation organizations. It identifies specific federal land for potential disposal to facilitate expected population growth and regional economic development needs, and prioritizes deployment of affordable housing projects.

- Will you support community-driven legislation like my bill that facilitates land disposal for housing economic development needs?
- As part of this Task Force, would you agree that lands identified for housing purposes should exclude lands already prioritized for other uses, such as hunting, fishing, grazing, recreation, habitat preservation, and other uses?
- Would you agree that lands should be prioritized near areas already developed with existing infrastructure and can provide enduring affordability for those people that cannot afford home ownership?
- Do you support selling our public lands to pay down the debt or other cost cutting efforts?

Response: As I stated in my hearing, I know housing affordability is a major issue, not just in the West, but across the country. There is no doubt that the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) has proven to be an incredible, lawful tool provided by Congress to ensure public land availability for important public purposes, while also generating billions of dollars that have benefited education, conservation, and important water facilities in Nevada. Secretary Burgum and HUD Secretary Turner recently announced an initiative to open underutilized federal land to build affordable housing, particularly for overlooked rural and tribal communities. If I am confirmed, it will be a priority to advance this initiative in accordance with all federal laws, and I look forward to reviewing your legislation and working with you and this committee to meet this critical need.

Questions from Senator John W. Hickenlooper

Question 1: On the Colorado River, we’re facing a big question: how do we manage our water well into the future when there is less of it than ever to go around? The seven Basin States are in the middle of a major water negotiation which will shape the course of how the West will grow our communities and economies for decades to come. We need to lock in a plan within the next few months to stay on track to implement that plan before existing agreements run out. As Deputy Secretary, you will be in a key position for supporting that negotiation and helping find an outcome that works for the Basin as a whole. As thorny as water issues can be, there’s a

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saving grace: they're bipartisan. Here in the Senate and back in Colorado, we work across party lines to figure out how to make the most of the limited water we have. Will you work with me – and the Basin States and Tribes – to push for rapidly securing a plan for water management on the Colorado River?

Response: The Colorado River is a critical water resource to the seven basin states, Tribes, water users, and other stakeholders. As I stated at my hearing, there are many opinions among stakeholders as to the appropriate approach to manage water within the Colorado Basin. Ultimately, this is a state-brokered process. The Department will play a role, but what has been most successful in the past is for the states to come to a consensus agreement on future management of this critical resource within the Colorado basin.

Question 2: The Trump administration has asserted an “energy dominance” agenda, but is taking actions to block energy infrastructure investments and renewable energy development on our public lands and waters. Ms. MacGregor, will you work with me to meet our nation’s growing energy needs, including by boosting solar, wind, and storage development on our public lands?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to working with you to address the national energy emergency and increasing our domestic supply of reliable, affordable energy in accordance with law.

Question 3: Public lands in Colorado are crucial to our economy, public health, our ranching industry, and our way of life – and because of that, we are able to build our public lands work on a strong foundation of local support. But many Coloradans are concerned about the threats to rollback protections of our treasured places – and want to make sure we can continue to camp, hike, fish, and enjoy those places for generations into the future. I invite you to join me in Colorado to see the strong stakeholder support we’ve gained on our efforts to protect our lands, before taking any action to remove those protections. Will you work with me on the public lands issues that mean so much to Coloradans?

Response: I have personally camped, hiked, and participated in innumerable outdoor recreational opportunities on public lands in Colorado and believe we can continue to maintain a balance between the varying statutory uses of land in your State. If confirmed, I will work with you on public lands issues, and I would be honored to join you in Colorado to visit the special places that are important to you and your constituents.

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Questions from Ranking Member Martin Heinrich

Question 1: Secretary Wright, President Trump, and Elon Musk are planning to cancel energy projects that reduce energy costs – things like wind, solar, energy storage, energy efficiency, and other projects and technologies that the public supports and develop good jobs here in the U.S. In fact, \$46 billion of existing research and development and demonstration project contracts are at stake at the Department of Energy (DOE). These contracts obligate the federal government to uphold their side of the agreement, yet time and time again at DOE and other agencies across the government, we see Trump administration appointees illegally freezing and cancelling grants, loans and government programs that would deliver cost-saving clean energy to millions of people across the country.

- Would you pursue illegal impoundments of Congressionally approved funds? Would you follow court orders to release funds previously illegally frozen, blocked or impounded?

Response: If confirmed, I will follow the law.

Question 2: During a 2023 hearing as a Commissioner on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, you appeared to use reliability issues during Winter Storm Uri as an example of low prices in the capacity market causing fossil fuel plants to retire early. With regard to Winter Storm Uri, didn't PJM's own analysis of the challenges it faced during this period was not due to a lack of capacity, but the failure of generators who were paid hundreds of millions of dollars in capacity market payments to meet their obligations to do so? Didn't PJM's analysis determine that of the outages that occurred, 63% were natural gas, 28% coal, 4% oil, 2% nuclear, 1% hydro, and 1% other and that "wind and solar resources performed as the near-term forecasts projected." How does the outage rate of natural gas fired plants compare to other technologies? Didn't PJM attribute much of the failure of gas plants to operate on temperature related failures at the plant as well as impacts on gas production at the wellhead?

- PJM had already identified lack of weatherization as a fundamental cause of gas plant failures during the 2014 Polar Vortex outages and claimed in its recent analysis that it had asked FERC and NERC to adopt stricter weatherization standards for generators, which they have thus far declined to do. Is that correct?
- Would you pursue fixing this reliability issue that fossil fueled electricity generating resources are causing in the position for which you are nominated at DOE?

Response: The Department of Energy does not directly oversee the development of reliability standards for natural gas pipelines or natural gas generators. However, as reflected in my testimony at the hearing and in my writings while at FERC, I consider reliability a paramount concern for the utility system and will take every opportunity to improve the reliability of the entire utility system—including its primary inputs—should I be confirmed as Deputy Secretary.

Question 3: Secretary Wright has been very vocal about the urgent need for grid expansion, making strengthening our transmission system Action Item #8 in his first Secretarial Order. As we bring more generation online, what do you think are the most important steps DOE can take to make sure we make tangible, near-term progress on this transmission-related action item?

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Response: Strengthening, modernizing, and expanding the transmission system and other critical infrastructure is a top priority. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing DOE's transmission programs and will look for ways to improve current transmission infrastructure and in cooperation with the transmission owners and operators to meet growing demand.

Question 4: The DOE Organization Act states that "In the performance of their functions, the members, employees, or other personnel of the Commission shall not be responsible to or subject to the supervision or direction of any officer, employee, or agent of any other part of the Department [of Energy]" (section 401(d)). If you are confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Energy, do you commit to follow the law and refraining from supervising the Commissioners, employees, and personnel of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in any way?

Response: If confirmed, I will follow the law, including the Department of Energy Organization Act.

Question 5: In your testimony for your confirmation hearing to become a FERC Commissioner, you said "I will endeavor to live up to FERC's great tradition of flexibility, independence, and collegiality." If you are confirmed as Deputy Energy Secretary, do you agree to respect these same tenets, including FERC's independence?

- If confirmed, how would you ensure that DOE actions or policy directions do not improperly influence or pressure the independent decision-making process of FERC commissioners?
- How will you ensure transparent and appropriate communication between the DOE and FERC, particularly when it comes to pending matters before the Commission?

Response: If confirmed, I will follow the law, including the Government in the Sunshine Act.

Question 6: In your previous hearing, in discussing the 2017 DOE Grid Reliability Pricing Rule proceeding, you said "The FERC is not in the business of picking winners and losers and never has been. The objective that we have in regulating our markets is trying to get the most accurate possible price signals to ensure just and reasonable rates." Do you continue to agree with this and commit not to take any action at DOE that would force FERC to pick winners and losers in the markets? (see Tr. At 50)

Response: FERC is obligated to ensure just and reasonable rates. For a rate to be just and reasonable, particularly in FERC-jurisdictional markets, they must afford sufficient compensation to ensure the retention of needed, existing generation and to incentivize the development of new, needed generation, with the attributes necessary to maintain the reliable operation of bulk power systems.

Question 7: Under DOE Act § 404 (42 U.S.C. § 7174), the Secretary has certain authorities that used to be exercised by the Federal Power Commission. But if the Secretary proposes a rule, regulation, or policy statement under a function that used to belong to the Federal Power Commission, he must notify FERC.

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- Even in granting the Secretary some authority, Congress made sure FERC could have the final word on significant matters. Do you as Deputy Secretary to follow this law?

Response: Yes, I will follow the law, including the Department of Energy Organization Act.

Question 8: The Secretary has certain emergency authorities. One of those is section 202(c) of the Federal Power Act. The authority in section 202(c) requires an emergency. What is your plan for ensuring that each aspect of section 202(c)(2) is followed and fully taken into account. Do you commit to that?

Response: The Secretary of Energy does have emergency authorities under section 202(c) of the Federal Power Act which allows the Secretary to take actions related to various matters including facility connections, generation, and transmission. While I am currently unaware of specific actions being taken or considered under the Act, I commit to following the law.

Question 9: When you testified in front of this committee for the role of FERC Commissioner, you stated “I agree that the climate is changing.”

- Do you agree with your previous testimony and the vast majority of scientists that climate change is real and is caused by human activity?
- If confirmed, do you commit that your decisions on the agency’s behalf are rooted in sound science?

Response: The climate is changing. Human activity changes the chemical composition of the atmosphere. Good science is foundational, and is it fundamental to the mission of the U.S. Department of Energy.

Question 10: DOE’s Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy recently published a report titled “2024 EERE Investment Snapshot: Advancing Energy Innovation Across America.” This report detailed EERE’s impressive investment portfolio, including a map of EERE’s almost 2,000 active awards across the country – including an active award in every state. This same EERE report also detailed EERE’s progress in reducing costs for American consumers. The median U.S. homeowner can save almost \$50,000 over 25 years by installing solar panels, a benefit more widely available due to the 78% reduction in the cost of rooftop solar since 2005 – an achievement that would not be possible without the work of EERE and its partners.

- How do you plan to leverage EERE and its partners’ work to deliver savings for American consumers?

Response: President Trump campaigned and won the election in significant part due to his commitment to lower costs for Americans and deliver affordable, reliable, secure energy. I know Secretary Wright is fully committed to this goal and I enthusiastically support President Trump’s objective to improve the lives of Americans through better energy policy.

Question 11. DOE also plays an important role in incubating next-generation clean energy technologies that are not yet market-ready, but that could lead to billions in savings for Americans for generations to come.

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- How will you approach DOE's longstanding role in fostering energy innovation through investments across the research, development, and demonstration learning curve to ensure the United States remains globally competitive?
- Can you commit to ensuring that DOE's clean energy programs have the resources they need to continue the vital research, development, demonstration, and deployment of next-generation technologies?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to ensure the U.S. Department of Energy is able to support unleashing all forms of affordable and reliable energy and fostering technology innovations.

Question 12: There is ample evidence that increasing demand for electricity - driven by the growth of artificial intelligence and data centers - will strain the grid in the coming years. McKinsey has estimated that electricity demand from data centers alone could reach over 30 GW within 5 years, which could translate into requiring a quarter of all energy demand in states like Texas.

- One of the most cost-effective ways to meet this increased demand is to build additional transmission infrastructure, and the Department of Energy plays an important role. For example, the Grid Deployment Office is supporting 4,000+ miles of new and upgraded transmission lines by 2031. Can you confirm that you will support the work of the Grid Deployment Office so that Americans can have affordable and reliable energy while meeting demand for new industries?

Response: Strengthening, modernizing, and protecting the electricity system and other critical infrastructure is a top priority. I support the objective of hardening the transmission system and look forward to learning more about efforts underway at the U.S. Department of Energy to advance this goal.

Question 13: During Winter Storms Uri and Elliott, increased regional and interregional transmission enabled MISO and SPP to minimize blackouts, whereas the lack of transmission prevented ERCOT and parts of the Southeast from doing the same. Do you support increased interregional transmission to minimize blackouts and save American lives? What measures would you take as Deputy Energy Secretary to encourage transmission buildout to ensure reliability?

Response: Interregional transmission can provide much needed transmission capacity between regions enjoying surplus and regions suffering scarcity. In order to ensure the most cost-effective development of the transmission system, all transmission—including interregional transmission—should be developed in order to improve efficiency (e.g., reducing congestion) or fulfill North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) reliability standards. If confirmed, I will prioritize the reliable operation of the bulk power system.

Question 14: During your tenure at FERC, the commission passed order No. 2222, calling for integration of distributed energy resources in wholesale energy markets, to improve reliability and lower costs by greater competition. Along the same line, recently researchers from Duke University released a report showing that 1% curtailment of peak loads can enable 126 GW of

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new demands, which is more than half of expected increase in the coming decade. We know that several energy markets have targets for distributed resources, ERCOT for example, to help them handle peak-hour grid congestion. While you dissented on Order 2222, the fact remains that the electricity sector is facing unprecedented demand growth. Will you commit to support programs that enable all tools for addressing this challenge, including more deployment and integration of distributed resources on the grid?

Response: Modernizing and expanding our transmission infrastructure is critical to meeting the nation's growing electricity demands. As we see new load coming online from advanced manufacturing, data center and other sectors, additional transmission will be needed to ensure that affordable, reliable American energy can reach those communities, businesses, and consumers.

Questions from Senator Ron Wyden

Question 1: With U.S. electricity demand surging – and families feeling the squeeze of skyrocketing power bills – shouldn't our national strategy be to first maximize the fastest, cheapest solutions available? Energy efficiency has already met half of the Northwest's demand growth over the past several decades, saving ratepayers billions of dollars and avoiding millions of tons of CO2 through good old-fashioned American innovation. Isn't it just common sense to wring every last drop of savings from smarter energy use before throwing billions of dollars at costly, slow-to-build baseload generation, where possible?

Response: If we want consumers to have affordable energy, we need a strategy to maximize the availability of affordable, reliable, and secure American energy. Energy efficiency provides solutions to some of the challenge, but it cannot close the gap in meeting our current and projected demand levels. Our core focus must be to increase our availability of base-load sources like natural gas, nuclear and coal.

Question 2: The DOE Organization Act states that "In the performance of their functions, the members, employees, or other personnel of the Commission shall not be responsible to or subject to the supervision or direction of any officer, employee, or agent of any other part of the Department [of Energy]"([section 401\(d\)](#)). If you are confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Energy, do you commit to follow the law and refrain from supervising the Commissioners, employees, and personnel of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in any way?

Response: Yes, I will follow the law, including the Department of Energy Organization Act.

Question 3: The energy tax credits passed in the Inflation Reduction Act are part of the long history of Congress supporting energy production through the tax code. Do you agree that the technology-neutral electricity credits reduce the cost of generating new electricity for eligible projects? Do you think that reducing the cost of new generation makes electricity more affordable? Will you commit to reviewing the evidence that connects energy tax incentives to

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prices?¹ Do you agree that tax credits to onshore the energy manufacturing supply chain improves U.S. energy security? Do you agree that backtracking on administering tax policy reduces business certainty and results in stranded capital?

Response: As we discussed in our meeting, every tax regime tends to bias or favor one use of capital over another. I would need to understand a full details of any incentive regime in order to evaluate and respond to how it would influence the disposition of capital. As an Article 1 function, it is obviously the authority of Congress to author tax policy, but it is difficult to describe impacts and effects of a particular tax credit provision without knowing the counterfactual.

Question 4: One of the most cost-effective ways to meet increased electricity demand is to build additional transmission infrastructure, and the Department of Energy plays an important role. For example, the Grid Deployment Office is supporting 4,000+ miles of new and upgraded transmission lines by 2031. Can you confirm that you will support the work of the Grid Deployment Office so that Americans can have affordable and reliable energy while meeting demand for new industries?

Response: Modernizing and expanding our transmission infrastructure is critical to meeting the nation's growing electricity demands. As we see new load coming online from advanced manufacturing, data center and other sectors, additional transmission will be needed to ensure that affordable, reliable American energy can reach those communities, businesses, and consumers.

Questions from Senator Maria Cantwell

Question 1: Hanford Nuclear Cleanup Mission

Mr. Danly, on April 11, 2024, the U.S. Department of Energy, Washington state Department of Ecology and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency finalized a wholistic agreement that includes the January 8, 2025 Order Amending Consent Decree in the State of Washington v. the Department of Energy, et al. Case No. 08-5085-RMP and the January 3 and January 7, 2025 amendments to the Hanford Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order.

- Will you commit to upholding this holistic and hard-won agreement between the Department of Energy, State of Washington and the Environmental Protection Agency?
- Will you commit to supporting a Department of Energy budget that will allow the Department to meet cleanup milestones under the Tri-Party Agreement?

Response: The Hanford community played a unique and crucial role in protecting the United States during the Cold War and cleaning up the legacy waste at the Hanford site is one of the top

¹ Aurora Energy Research. "Impact of reform to clean energy tax credits on investment, jobs and consumer bills," January 6, 2025; Brattle. "A Wide Array of Resources is Needed to Meet Growing U.S. Energy Demand," February 2025.; NERA Economic Consulting. "Electricity Price Impacts of Technology-Neutral Tax Incentives With Incremental Electricity Demand from Data Centers," February 10, 2025.

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priorities for the U.S. Department of Energy. You have my commitment to review the needs of the Hanford site.

I support the Hanford Agreement as a key mechanism to facilitate and guide the Hanford cleanup and to the extent that the U.S. Department of Energy has obligations to discharge, I will work to ensure those obligations are met.

I am very concerned about the layoffs and retirements that have resulted from DOGE at the Department, including at its Richland Office which oversees Hanford. We are losing highly qualified people at Hanford and I'm concerned about the workforce and the ability to meet project milestones.

- If confirmed, will you help ensure Hanford's workforce does not experience reductions that would impact Hanford's ability to legal cleanup milestones?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to review the workforce needs required to meet the Department's obligations.

The Tri-City community near Hanford has been working for decades to leverage assets such as DOE's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Washington State University Tri-Cities, Energy Northwest's Columbia Generating Station, and the local skilled workforce to become a leading clean energy hub nationally, with a particular focus on nuclear energy and decarbonized industrial production. Additionally, there are countless opportunities for beneficial reuse of DOE land, facilities, and materials such as the Strontium 90 at Hanford's Waste Encapsulation Storage Facility.

- Can you please share your thoughts on what you envision DOE's role to be in supporting economic growth and diversification in communities near DOE sites?

Response: The Department should evaluate existing sites for future economic development opportunities, and when appropriate, determine viable options that leverage decommissioned locations with existing skilled workforce.

Question 2: Bonneville Power Administration

Mr. Danly, the Bonneville Power Administration delivers cost-effective and reliable electricity to rural and urban communities throughout the West, at no cost to the federal budget. Past administrations have proposed selling Power Marketing Administration's assets, including BPA's transmission. They have also proposed an end to cost-based rates which could increase costs to ratepayers.

As a result of recent personnel actions driven by the so-called Department of Government Efficiency, BPA lost an estimated 356 employees or 11 percent of its workforce through a combination of deferred resignation and the firing of probationary workers. Some of these employees were able to return to work – but BPA was already facing workforce shortages. BPA's headquarters was also included on a GSA list of facilities to be put up for sale.

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- Given BPA's unique grid safety and reliability role, which is funded by ratepayers and not taxpayers, do you commit to support exempting their workforce from the current hiring freeze and future reductions in force?
- Do you commit to oppose any proposal to auction off PMA assets, including those owned by Bonneville?
- Do you commit to protecting Bonneville Power Administration's decision-making independence as a Power Marketing Administration?
- Do you commit to working with Congress and customers to ensure the PMAs, including BPA, can continue their statutory mission unencumbered from interference?
- Do you commit to oppose any proposal to eliminate BPA's cost-based rates?

Response: I am not familiar with the full range of impacts upon the workforce, or the factors related to any potential or theoretical sale of Power Marketing Administration's (PMA's) assets. PMAs like the Bonneville Power Administration have played a unique and important role in the U.S. energy system, particularly in delivering federally generated hydropower to consumers, supporting reliability, and providing rural customers in underserved regions access to affordable electricity.

Question 3: Pacific Northwest National Laboratory

Mr. Danly, the National laboratories bring tremendous capabilities and intellectual horsepower in key areas of energy and national security including grid reliability, energy storage and cybersecurity.

- Will you advocate for robust resources for our national labs and continued investments in improving the capabilities and infrastructure of our national labs?

Response: The National Laboratories are a scientific treasure for our country, and, if confirmed, I will work to provide resources to fulfill their essential mission.

One example is the cutting-edge capabilities associated with PNNL's Energy Infrastructure Operations Center, which has supported efforts like the Department's North American Energy Resilience Model (NAERM); as well as bringing the Department's AI capabilities to emerging topics of importance including wildfire risk, preparedness, and response.

- How do you plan to fully engage and utilize national labs to improve the reliability, affordability and security of our energy system?
- How do you plan to work within the Department and with our national labs to ensure a modern, reliable and secure grid?

Response: DOE's National Laboratories are an essential feature of DOE's extraordinary cutting-edge research and scientific programs. If confirmed, I will look forward to visiting the PNNL as one of our outstanding examples and being briefed on the current and potential initiatives to improve the reliability of the transmission system.

There are considerable challenges, especially out west, to maintain grid reliability and affordability driven by large increases in demand, including data centers, increased renewable with inverter-based devices like solar and wind and lack of regional planning integrating

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transmission and distribution. All of this is happening against the very real backdrop of increasing wildfire threat to our infrastructure.

- How do you plan to ensure the Department will engage regional stakeholders and national laboratories to improve the grid reliability, security and affordability of our country's energy system?

Response: While I am not currently at the Department and have not been fully briefed on current activities, it has been my consistent view that a reliable transmission system remains an essential element of our nation's infrastructure. It is the backbone for critical services, economic growth and basic reliability for homes and businesses. It is key to have robust engagement with a myriad of stakeholders to make sure all data points and perspectives are taken into account as we work to improve and expand the capacity and reliability of our transmission system.

Last year I attended the dedication of the Grid Storage Launchpad (GSL) at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. As you may know, GSL is a grid energy storage research and development facility that will help accelerate development of next-generation grid energy storage technologies.

- How will you as the leader of the Department utilize GSL to advance America's energy storage competitiveness to eliminate/reduce our reliance on foreign owned critical minerals and foreign supply chain risks?

Response: While I am not currently at the Department and have not been fully briefed on current activities, developing and deepening domestic supply chains to manufacture energy technologies, including for energy storage, will increase grid resilience and I look forward to learning more about this initiative.

Starting in the first Trump Administration, DOE has invested in advancing the role of energy innovation in the blue economy—ports, maritime, marine energy and ocean observation—and advancing our nation's energy security. Some of those key investments have been made at the Department's Marine and Coastal Research Laboratory at PNNL-Sequim.

- Will you commit to continuing DOE's support for these investments, and visit PNNL-Sequim?

Response: While I am not currently at the Department and have not been fully briefed on current activities, if confirmed, I will look forward to learning more about the laboratory at PNNL-Sequim and understanding the advantages and potential of these technologies.

As you know, DOE has a key role to play in AI. In my home state for example, PNNL is a leader in applying AI to grid modernization, advancing scientific discovery in chemistry, and national security. It is critical that DOE is properly included as the Trump Administration approaches AI, including utilizing national laboratory assets.

- How will you ensure that DOE's capabilities are brought to bear in AI, across the Trump Administration and for the nation? How will you ensure that DOE and its national labs can continue advancing AI work?

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- As artificial intelligence continues to transform our world, including at our national labs, what role do you see for national labs and the Department of Energy in driving innovation in, and application of, AI technologies?

Response: The Department and its National Laboratories, especially PNNL, are poised to play a pivotal role in new AI innovations, which will have follow-on benefits to the private sector and the public. If confirmed, I stand ready to support such efforts.

The national labs contribute to U.S. national security in many ways; the Pacific Northwest National Lab in my home state is the lab of choice for the Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation program and supports the nuclear deterrent.

- Given the strategic contributions of the labs beyond the traditional weapons labs to national security, what is your view on ensuring that all national labs continue to advance both scientific innovation and national security?
- What role will the Department continue to play in supporting nuclear nonproliferation?

Response: I agree that our National Laboratories are important places for foundational research – leading cutting-edge scientific discoveries. They are also integral to our national security, including ensuring nuclear nonproliferation. If confirmed, I intend to continue these important missions.

The national labs play a pivotal role in advancing a wide range of scientific disciplines, from quantum computing to developing the world's most sensitive instruments.

- What is your view on the importance of continued investment in these research areas at the national labs to maintain U.S. leadership in technological innovation and national security?

Response: As I stated in the hearing, we need to recommit ourselves to America's pre-eminence as the world's leader in science and technology. The National Laboratories, which are the crown jewel of the Department, have been the source of countless advances over the years, both in pure and applied science. These advances and discoveries have driven commercial development, spawned new industries and ensured American prosperity. The National Labs continue to make significant advances, including in quantum computing, AI and fundamental research.

Question 4: Fusion Energy

Mr. Danly, one of the great energy successes we have had in recent years is in fostering public-private partnerships. These partnerships are especially critical for supporting the rapid expansion of newer energy technologies.

- Can explain how you believe the Department of Energy can continue to support the development of public-private partnerships to help the commercial deployment of emerging technologies such as fusion energy.

Response: The U.S. Department of Energy has funded research, development, and deployment with the private sector that has led to significant breakthroughs in energy technology and participated in public-private partnerships on energy demonstration projects. If confirmed, I will

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look forward to evaluating existing public-private partnerships in technology innovation to strengthen U.S. competitiveness and energy security.

As the US looks to lead on the development of next generation power technologies, like fusion, but also advanced nuclear, and enhanced geothermal, what role do you envision for the DOE in helping bring these new technologies to the market?

- In particular, what role do you see the DOE Loan Programs Office (LPO) in helping financially support new generation technologies not yet at commercial scale?
- What other actions do you believe the Department of Energy should take to ensure the U.S. remains the world leader in fusion technology?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about DOE's Loan Programs Office and other DOE programs directed by Congress to accelerate emerging technology demonstration and scalability. I also intend to evaluate fusion energy research, innovation, and related work underway at the Department of Energy's national laboratories, and if confirmed, I look forward to working with your office on this and other promising technologies.

Fusion energy is an inherently safe and predictable, geographically unconstrained baseload power source that could contribute to the resilience and reliability of America's energy grid right as domestic power demands are increasing rapidly. We are in a global race to develop fusion energy, and in order to maintain energy dominance and global leadership, the U.S. needs to win that race.

As co-chair of the Commission on the Scaling of Fusion Energy, I want to point you to the commission's recently released preliminary report that recommends "the United States should establish an explicit National Fusion Goal of starting construction on the world's first commercial fusion power plant this decade. Achieving this goal would solidify the United States as the world's leader in fusion energy, and catalyze a thriving and ultimately self-sustaining commercial fusion industry."

- Will you commit to reviewing this report that lays out the case for fusion energy and steps we need to take now to ensure the United States is in position to win this race?

Response: Fusion energy holds great potential and has profound geopolitical implications. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing this report and its recommendations on how to capitalize on recent fusion advancements.

Question 5: Transmission

Mr. Danly, as you well know, FERC estimates that electricity demand will grow by 128 GW nationwide in the next five years, more than 15% from today's levels from a variety of sectors including manufacturing, data centers, and electrification. In Washington State we are expecting demand growth of 30% over the next decade.

Even if we built enough generation tomorrow to meet this new demand, we don't have sufficient transmission to transport moving the power. It currently takes at least 7-11 years to build new large transmission in the United States.

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- How will DOE help address the urgent transmission bottlenecks today that are inhibiting economic growth and American leadership on AI?

Response: Lack of electric transmission capacity in some areas is one of the biggest barriers to economic growth, including growth led by manufacturing and AI. The United States has of late failed to build much in the way of new large scale transmission projects. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the Energy Department's authorities to accelerate the process for to make timely decisions, so project developers have certainty to make long-term investments to meet growing energy demands.

Lack of electric transmission capacity is one of the biggest barriers to economic growth led by manufacturing and AI, and yet the United States is largely incapable of building new large scale transmission projects: only 55 miles of new high-voltage transmission were built in 2023. Permitting bureaucracy and red tape, myopic electricity system planning processes, and interstate disagreements on how to calculate who benefits from (and thus who pays for) a transmission line have ground new construction largely to a halt.

- How can DOE help address these market barriers to getting new steel in the ground to drive economic growth?

Response: As I stated in my nomination hearing, it has become increasingly difficult to build things in America, including transmission infrastructure. Interminable delays, legal challenges that threaten federal permits once obtained, and an ever-changing regulatory landscape has chilled investment. The Trump Administration is committed to identifying barriers to energy and infrastructure deployment, and if confirmed, I look forward to working to address them.

Question 6: Smart Grid Grants

Mr. Danly, this Committee authored provisions in the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to make the U.S. power grid more resilient, adaptive, and efficient. So far, DOE has invested more than \$14 billion of the dollars Congress provided to boost the U.S. power grid. Funding that has been matched many times over by the private sector in all 50 states.

Many states have received support through important programs like the Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships (or GRIP program) that I originally authored back in 2007. These investments will have tangible benefits and cost savings of nearly \$100 million for electric ratepayers in my State.

- Will you commit to seeing these important grid investments through to completion?
- Will you work to ensure that all remaining funding in these important grid-enhancing programs from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law are deployed by the Department of Energy?

Response: Strengthening, modernizing, and protecting the transmission system and other critical infrastructure is a top priority. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the GRIP program and other efforts and investments underway at the Department to meet the urgency of this challenge.

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Question 7: Transmission Facilitation Program

Mr. Danly, Congress created the DOE's Transmission Facilitation Program (TFP) in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to help build out new interregional transmission lines across the country. The TFP is a revolving fund program to provide Federal support to overcome the financial hurdles in the development of large-scale new transmission lines and upgrading existing transmission, which ultimately results in no federal ownership or cost to the taxpayer.

- Do you think the bipartisan Transmission Facilitation Program has been a success?
- Will you commit to supporting it as a tool to facilitate investment in major new transmission lines all across the U.S. at no additional cost to taxpayers?

Response: As I stated in my nomination hearing, the United States needs a more robust transmission system – to meet growing energy demands, to meet North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) reliability standards, and to simply get real power to its destination. While I am not currently at the Department and have not been fully briefed on current activities, I look forward to learning more about the activities of this program.

Question 8: Hydrogen Hubs

Mr. Danly, one of the most widely supported energy investments by Congress has been figuring out how we can accelerate the use of hydrogen.

DOE selected the Pacific Northwest Hydrogen Hub - which was a joint application from entities in Washington, Oregon, and Montana – to serve as a national model of how an integrated, emission free hydrogen network.

- Will you work with Congress to continue the strong bipartisan support for scaling up clean and affordable hydrogen, including championing DOE's hydrogen hub program?

Response: I will work to foster the continued leadership of DOE in supporting the development and successful implementation of energy technologies that deliver all forms of affordable, reliable and secure American energy. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about DOE's work on the Hydrogen Hubs and understanding your views on the best ways to lead the world in energy innovation and technology breakthroughs.

Recently, there have been concerning reports about so called "hit lists" for different DOE clean energy grants that have been awarded but not fully disbursed. One of the projects on that list is the Pacific Northwest Hydrogen Hub.

- Do you commit to honoring pre-existing grant agreements, when the project terms and technical milestones have been and continue to be met?
- Do you commit that any review of projects be based on merit and meeting the terms of the grant agreement, and in no way based on a political screen that rewards and punishes projects based on hub locations and their political representation?

Response: If confirmed, I will follow the law and work to ensure DOE's obligations are upheld.

DOE's input to Treasury and the White House will continue to play a major role in implementing the hydrogen 45V production tax credit.

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- Do you support the hydrogen tax credit that the hubs have said is necessary for their success and for standing up the overall national hydrogen economy?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to foster the continued leadership of DOE in supporting the development and successful implementation of energy technologies that deliver all forms of affordable, reliable and secure American energy.

Question 9: Advanced Nuclear & Fuel Supply

Mr. Danly, my home state of Washington is a key epicenter of advanced nuclear energy in the United States.

TerraPower, based in Bellevue, WA, is leading the way with Natrium, an advanced reactor being built in Wyoming as part of a public-private partnership with the Department of Energy under the Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program, or ARDP. X-Energy, the other ARDP demonstration awardee, is also looking to build a future reactor in Washington.

- Do you agree that we should continue to fully fund ARDP and ensure that the U.S. leads the way on advanced nuclear reactor technology?

Response: I look forward to learning more about the Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program and its potential to spur new baseload power generation, promote U.S. innovation, and counter the growing influence of overseas adversaries. If confirmed, I look forward to discussing the program's timelines, activities, and goals.

High-assay, low-enriched uranium, or HALEU, is set to power the future fleet of advanced Generation 4 reactors. I understand the advanced nuclear energy community is anxiously waiting for the Department of Energy to advance its plan to establish a domestic uranium enrichment supply chain right here in the United States and move away from dependence on countries like Russia and China.

- Will you commit to continue to support DOE's HALEU availability program?

Response: America's domestic supply of enriched uranium is essential for the United States. If confirmed, I will evaluate the Department's current plans and approach to the HALEU program with the goal of making it successful.

Question 10: Surplus DOE Lands

Mr. Danly, I represent communities that support development of advanced reactors as well as critical parts of the nuclear fuel cycle and supply chain. In some cases, surplus DOE lands might be suitable for these nuclear facilities.

- Will you commit to reviewing and supporting where appropriate the use of surplus non-contaminated federal land for new energy development?

Response: Yes, if confirmed, I look forward to reviewing and discussing this issue further with you and your staff.

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Question 11: Wind Power

Mr. Danly, all domestic energy sources, including wind, will be key to meeting upcoming rising energy demand needs.

- Will you support a timely conclusion of the review of Federal wind leasing and permitting directed by the Presidential Memo that halts all Federal permitting of wind energy, even on private land, until that review is finished?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to delivering upon President Trump's and Secretary Wright's priority to unleash all forms of affordable, reliable, and secure American energy.

Question 12: Battery Supply Chains

Mr. Danly, we need to continue to onshore and diversify American energy and ensure are we not dependent on unstable or adversarial nations. The Washington state battery industry, including companies like Group14 and Sila, have worked with DOE and PNNL for the past decade to do just that, while also providing economic opportunities in our rural communities by building advanced silicon battery material factories in Central Washington. Unfortunately, the vast majority of lithium-ion batteries and energy storage technologies depend on graphite, and 95% of the world's battery-grade graphite is controlled by China. As China further restricts exports to the U.S., the urgency to strengthen domestic battery supply chains, including through these key Washington state factories, only grows.

- Given the rapidly increasing demand for energy storage solutions to support the grid, data centers, and other critical infrastructure, what steps would you take to continue fostering growth and resilience for U.S. battery supply chains, particularly for raw materials and silicon battery manufacturing, that can help end our dependence on Chinese graphite?

Response: I agree that secure and reliable supply chains for critical materials, including critical minerals, are key to a prosperous and competitive economy. If confirmed, I look forward to evaluating ways for the United States to further enhance our supply chains, increase private sector investment, decrease our dependence on adversarial nations, create jobs, and strengthen our national security.

Industries working on battery recycling are also vital to securing our supply chain, as well as being big job creators and more sustainable than primary extraction. DOE has been essential to battery recycling and creating more efficient and sustainable batteries.

- Do you support continuing investments and work at DOE on battery recycling and alternative battery chemistries?

Response: I look forward to learning more about battery recycling and being briefed on current DOE efforts in this area.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act included funding for the Department of Energy to bolster domestic battery supply chains and manufacturing and recycling capacity. Since it was signed into law, many grants have been awarded for new domestic battery manufacturing facilities to shore up the supply chain. Many companies are in the midst of construction.

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- Do you commit to honoring legal agreements for these grants and ensuring projects that have already broken ground will continue to be able to access their grants and receive reimbursements through completion of the projects?

Response: If confirmed, I will follow the law and work to ensure DOE's obligations are upheld.

Questions from Senator Mazie Hirono

Question 1: Hawaii is the state with the highest dependence on petroleum and the highest cost of power. Hawaii's energy vulnerability affects our people, our economy, and the Department of Defense installations in our state. With the past help of the Department of Energy, Hawaii is working to move from relying on imported oil for most of its power to using 100 percent renewable power by 2045. Companies in Hawaii are also seeking locally sourced, lower-carbon fuels for aviation and providing power for military installations. If you are confirmed, will you support Hawaii's efforts to become energy independent?

Response: I support Hawaii's efforts to have access to reliable, affordable, secure energy, particularly where it aligns with national defense readiness and economic competitiveness. Energy independence must be pursued in a way that is economically practicable and aligned with reliability. We should focus on practical, cost-effective solutions that reduce dependence on foreign fuel sources.

Question 2: The President has issued Executive Orders limiting renewable energy and favoring fossil fuels. Recent press reports indicate that the Department of Energy is preparing to eliminate grants and loans for certain clean energy projects. Do you acknowledge that when Congress has authorized and appropriated funds for programs that support clean energy projects, the Department must faithfully execute the law and expend the funds for the purposes established by Congress?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to following the law in my duties at the Department of Energy.

Question 3: At the end of January President Trump fired numerous Inspectors General, including IG Donaldson at the Department of Energy. It is estimated that in FY 2023, OIGs saved \$93.1 billion in taxpayer dollars, while its budget was \$3.5 billion—equating to \$26 saved for every dollar spent. The Inspectors General are trained experts in combatting waste, fraud, and abuse to serve the American public and protect taxpayer dollars. They are not political appointees to serve the whims of a President or Cabinet Secretaries. Do you believe that Inspectors General should be nonpolitical? Is their work important to the functioning of the Department?

Response: Inspectors General serve a critical function to provide accountability and oversight across the government. The Inspectors General should also be held to a high standard, no office in government operates without transparency and accountability and, under the Constitution, the President has the authority to remove Inspectors General.

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Questions from Senator Catherine Cortez Masto

Question 1: Mr. Danly, in January – Energy Secretary Chris Wright provided the following QFR response during his nomination process: “The people of Nevada are not in favor of Yucca Mountain, and thus President Trump and I do not support Yucca Mountain as a waste repository.”

Should you be confirmed, will you please commit to myself and Nevadans that you’ll uphold this position and oppose the unworkable Yucca Mountain project?

Response: The people of Nevada are not in favor of Yucca Mountain, and consequently President Trump and Secretary Wright have not been in support of Yucca Mountain as a waste repository. I agree with President Trump and Secretary Wright regarding the importance of local consent when siting such facilities, and do not support siting the facility in face of local opposition.

Question 2: Just this week, I received outreach from a Nevada-based company that holds a Department of Energy (DOE) contract for funds – which they are matching – to be invested in a partnership with the University of Nevada, Reno in my home state. However, recent actions by DOE have halted this project, causing uncertainty and impacting innovation, job creation, and workforce development. And this is an entity that can contribute to the critical minerals executive order President Trump recently issued.

If confirmed, will you commit to providing immediate, transparent status updates to entities with contracts on hold?

And will you commit to providing me and my staff with a timely briefing on this matter as soon as possible, and ensure that retribution will not be applied to any company that speaks up on this matter?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to a timely and thorough review of projects. I look forward to making sure the department engages with all relevant stakeholders and working with you and your office to provide appropriate updates and information.

Question 3: As you know from your time at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the nation is currently experiencing an increase in energy demand, and there is an overall consensus that new data centers will not only require greater amounts of energy, but also large parcels of land, access to broadband, and access to water for cooling purposes.

If confirmed, how would you work to convene and coordinate with energy utilities on today’s grid challenges, such as growing energy demand, cybersecurity, and supply chain or transmission needs?

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Stable energy prices are critical for large energy consumers, but also for small businesses and families. What specific measures would you take to ensure energy affordability?

Would you be willing to provide technical support to help state and local governments analyze the potential impacts of infrastructure investments for data centers and other large, strategic loads, including assessments of their potential impacts on people and communities?

Response: It is important to have a full understanding of the infrastructure needs and investments required to drive the innovations and development as we have seen in AI, data centers and advanced manufacturing. The Department of Energy should strive to work with local communities to understand the impacts and value of these investments.

Question 4: Research shows that in-school air and traffic pollution plays a role in the development of asthma that goes beyond just triggering health symptoms. That's why I've worked in a bipartisan manner to put this technology in the hands of our nation's schools.

If confirmed, how would you and the Department factor in health impacts for future decisions that might undermine the adoption of cleaner building and transportation technologies?

Should you be confirmed, would you commit to restoring the Department's Renew America's Schools website and ensuring that Districts across the country can apply for funds made available by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law?

Response: We all support clean air and safe environments for classrooms and schools. I will commit to understanding the department's capacity and capabilities to assess our involvement.

Question 5: During my time in Congress, I've worked with my colleagues to ensure that our Tribes can access critical programs to unlock energy resources on their Reservation and lands.

If confirmed, will you commit to conducting Tribal consultation before any changes are made to DOE programs affecting Tribes?

Similarly, will you commit to support Tribal efforts to access funding and technical assistance for energy projects that Tribes want to pursue?

Response: While I am not familiar with the specifics of the example you mentioned, I support engaging with external partners – including tribal governments, universities and private sector entities – when DOE programs impact them directly.

Questions from Senator John W. Hickenlooper

Question 1: Mr. Danly, President Trump at the end of his first term issued an Executive Order creating a new employee designation, Schedule F, that would have allowed federal employees to be terminated without the right to notice, appeal, or other basic civil service protections. While

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you were Chairman at FERC, you reported to the White House a list to classify 50% of the agency's positions as Schedule F employees. No other agency in the entire federal government other than OMB proposed listing more than about 10% of their positions as Schedule F. What criteria did you use to make the determination that 50% of the FERC workforce as Schedule F was appropriate?

Response: FERC has one of the most talented and dedicated workforces in the federal government. The staff of FERC is composed of rate makers, lawyers, scientists and engineers who are routinely called upon to exercise their independent, professional judgment in dispositively deciding matters brought before them under broad delegations of authority covering subjects as varied as electric reliability, the rates charged for the sale of power, litigation in the federal courts, the issuance of notices and orders, the acceptance or rejection of filings, rates charged for transmission service, the amendment of tariffs, and LNG terminal and natural gas pipeline siting and construction. Delegated orders carry the force of Commission orders—they bind the parties and establish legal obligations. Therefore, my belief was that these roles were policy roles .

Question 2: In his first Secretarial Order, Secretary Wright committed to strengthening the nation's transmission system to meet load growth. Despite this commitment, DOE has stalled or threatened funding for awarded projects that would boost the reliability of our nation's electric grid. Do you support investing in our electric grid and commit to fulfilling the financial commitments of the Department of Energy's Loan Programs Office, Grid Deployment Office, and other awarded grants and loans?

Response: I agree that we need to strengthen the transmission system and that we need more baseload power for the stability of the bulk electric system, which is a subject I have talked about frequently when I served on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

It is my understanding that the Department of Energy has a number of different programs designed to either permit the commercialization or help with the improvement of the preexisting facilities that are fundamental to keeping the transmission system working or developing new generation. President Trump and Secretary Wright have both shown great enthusiasm for getting as much new generation online and interconnected as quickly as possible. The Department should use every one of the tools at its disposal to ensure that we have as much generation available and as resilient a bulk power system as possible.

Question 3: Transmission siting and permitting is mired in controversy and litigation, causing significant delays, impacting energy reliability and resilience. If confirmed, how will you ensure transmission lines are being built fast enough to meet our surging energy demand?

Response: Most transmission siting and permitting happens at the state level. For transmission lines, generally, there is federal backstop siting authority. Transmission development has to be part of the solution for meeting rapidly growing energy demand, because as demand grows more generation and transmission will be needed to meet it, both to satisfy North American Electric

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Reliability Corporation (NERC) reliability standards and to simply get real power delivered to its destination.

Question 4: We are increasingly dependent on China for critical minerals essential to our economy, energy security, and national defense. I believe that addressing critical mineral supply chains is a bipartisan opportunity in this Congress. Do you agree that China is engaging in market manipulation to maintain its dominance in critical minerals, and that substantial federal investment and support are essential to boost domestic critical materials processing?

Response: I believe we should assume the Chinese central government is aggressively pursuing every opportunity to gain advantage with respect to their economy, defense capabilities, and industrial growth. Critical minerals are an essential element for many of their industrial ambitions. The United States should be taking every step to achieving our own objectives, including development of our critical minerals resources, particularly as it relates to continued advancements with AI and key industries like semiconductor manufacturing.

Question 5: The National Renewable Energy Lab is doing critical work to improve our energy security. I am deeply concerned about how future budget bills could affect NREL and Coloradans. Will you work with me to protect NREL's budget and the jobs of hard-working Coloradans? What role do you see DOE's National Labs, especially the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, playing in accelerating the deployment of next generation energy technologies such as advanced geothermal and nuclear?

Response: As I said in my opening remarks at the nomination hearing, we need to recommit ourselves to America's preeminence as the world's leader in science and technology. The National Labs, which are the crown jewel of the department, have had been the source of countless advances over the years, both in pure and applied science.

These advances and discoveries have driven commercial development, spawned new industries and ensured American prosperity. Recently, the National Labs have made advances in quantum computing, nuclear reactors, and fundamental scientific research that promise a new era of science and engineering. We must recommit to that mission to ensure that America continues to maintain its scientific and technological edge that the citizens of the United States have relied upon for so many decades.

Question 6: DOE's Loan Programs Office has financed over a \$50 billion portfolio of innovative energy projects, including for advanced fossil, nuclear, and critical materials projects. The office has a fantastic track record of creating jobs while minimizing financial losses. Will you continue to advance LPO's mission and honor the commitments that have already been made? Would you consider additional focus on particular technologies, such as geothermal or critical minerals?

Response: I commit to providing a thorough review of the LPO's programs and to supporting the objective of President Trump and Energy Secretary Wright's objective of providing affordable, reliable and secure energy resources.



The Honorable Mike Lee
Chairman
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Lee and Ranking Member Heinrich,

Consumer Energy Alliance (CEA), the leading energy and environmental advocate for families and businesses, writes with strong support for Ms. Katharine MacGregor's nomination for Deputy Secretary of the Interior, and Mr. James Danly's nomination for Deputy Secretary of Energy. Their proven records of leadership and deep understanding of the energy sector make them exceptional options to serve this nation and its growing need to develop energy and infrastructure.

Expanding domestic energy development and modernizing infrastructure has never been more critical to reducing household energy costs and providing much-needed relief to families and businesses whose energy bills have skyrocketed over the past five years. Both nominees have shown dedication to improving access to affordable, reliable, and environmentally sustainable energy for American consumers. Both nominees have played a vital role in enhancing America's energy security through efforts to streamline permitting for new energy infrastructure, modernize the electric grid, and remove regulatory burdens that hinder the energy industry from meeting increasing energy demands.

Ms. MacGregor is a wise choice for Deputy Secretary of the Interior. Her decades of experience in public service, including prior service as Deputy Secretary of the Interior, and her recent leadership at a large renewable energy company exemplify her ability to be a strong advocate for unlocking our country's vast domestic energy potential through understanding the vital role of public-private partnerships and cooperation to address America's energy needs. At the Interior Department, she helped reduce regulatory burdens and streamlined permitting for critical energy projects. Ms. MacGregor's commitment to promoting the sustainable development of our federal lands and waters is crucial for achieving domestic energy dominance. Her nomination reflects a dedication to pragmatically advancing energy security and the priorities of the Trump Administration.

Mr. Danly's nomination for Deputy Secretary of Energy reflects his strong record of public service and energy expertise as legal counsel, Commissioner, and then Chairman, of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). His background overseeing U.S. electricity markets and permitting for critical energy projects, such as transmission and pipelines, underscores his steadfast approach to following the law and protecting consumers. Mr. Danly's dedication to public service and understanding of the regulatory

FOR MORE INFORMATION

2211 Norfolk Street, Suite 610 • Houston, TX 77098 | (713) 337-8800
info@ConsumerEnergyAlliance.org



and policy aspects of the energy sector make him a superb choice for the Energy Department's second-in-command.

Both nominees have shown unwavering commitment to advancing American energy and supporting the innovation necessary to meet U.S. energy needs. Their leadership is needed to ensure Americans have continued access to affordable, reliable, and environmentally sustainable energy.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge this Committee to advance the confirmations of Ms. Katharine MacGregor and Mr. James Danly. Their leadership and vision for developing American energy will bring economic progress and energy dominance to all Americans.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Hammons".

Katie Hammons
Vice President
Consumer Energy Alliance

FOR MORE INFORMATION

2211 Norfolk Street, Suite 610 • Houston, TX 77098 | (713) 337-8800
info@ConsumerEnergyAlliance.org

April 2, 2025

The Honorable Mike Lee
Chairman
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Ranking Member
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Lee and Ranking Member Heinrich,

On behalf of the Louisiana Alligator Farmers and Ranchers Association, the Louisiana Landowners Association, and many small businesses within the alligator industry, we write to express our strong support for the nomination of Ms. Katharine MacGregor to serve as the next Deputy Secretary of the Interior. Ms. MacGregor has long been a thoughtful, knowledgeable, and balanced voice in the field of natural resource management, and we believe her confirmation would be a benefit to the Department of the Interior and to stakeholders across the country.

Our organizations represent hundreds of private landowners and businesses with stewardship of over 2 million acres of land in Louisiana. We embody licensed alligator farmers and ranchers as well as those involved in the alligator meat, raw skin, and leather industry located in rural communities across the Gulf South. We depend on sustainable use and science-based wildlife management for both conservation and economic livelihood. The American alligator is one of the greatest conservation success stories in the United States—a species that has rebounded from the brink of extinction thanks to public-private partnerships, innovative management programs, and robust collaboration between government and industry. These successes require leadership at the federal level that understands the nuances of multi-stakeholder conservation—and Ms. MacGregor brings exactly that.

As Deputy Secretary from 2019 to 2021, Ms. MacGregor worked effectively across agencies and with diverse interest groups, including those of us in the working lands and wildlife management sectors. She showed a consistent willingness to engage on issues such as sustainable use, species conservation, trade, and habitat protection. Her prior service as Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy at DOI and her decade of work in Congress on the House Natural Resources Committee further demonstrate her deep understanding of the complex balance between conservation, commerce, and community values.

Louisiana's alligator industry is not just a model for successful wildlife conservation—it is a living example of how science-based use of natural resources can empower rural economies, support working lands, and maintain healthy ecosystems. Ms. MacGregor has shown a clear commitment to these principles throughout her career. We are confident that her leadership will continue to uphold and promote policies that protect wildlife, support responsible use, and strengthen our connection to America's natural heritage. For these reasons, we strongly support the nomination of Ms. Katharine MacGregor to serve as Deputy Secretary of the Interior. We look forward to working with her and the Department upon her confirmation by the United States Senate.

Sincerely,

Louisiana Alligator Farmer and Ranchers Association

Louisiana Landowners Association, Inc.



North Slope Borough

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

P.O. Box 69
Barrow, Alaska 99723
Phone: 907 852- 0200
Fax: 907 852-0337



Josiah A. Patkotak, Mayor

March 25, 2025

The Honorable Mike Lee
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Support for Nomination of Kate MacGregor to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior

Dear Chairman Lee and Ranking Member Heinrich:

On behalf of the North Slope Borough, Alaska, I am writing to convey the Borough's strong support for the nomination by President Donald Trump of Katherine "Kate" MacGregor to serve as the Deputy Secretary of the Interior.

I serve as the Mayor of the North Slope Borough. The Borough is a county-level government and the largest municipality in the United States geographically. The Borough serves as the regional government for eight Alaska Native villages within an area roughly the size of Minnesota.

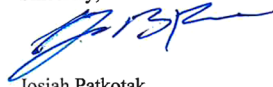
Approximately 70 percent of the Borough's population is Iñupiat, or Alaska Native. For thousands of years, the Iñupiat people of the North Slope have relied on the natural environment to subsist, and our residents today continue to depend on subsistence resources for their physical and cultural health. At the same time, in the 21st century and into the foreseeable future, our ability to sustain healthy communities also depends on a thriving economy. Taxes derived from oil and gas infrastructure are the primary source of municipal revenues that provide jobs and essential services for North Slope residents. Nearly all of the water, sewer, solid waste, transportation, and electrical utility services across the North Slope are provided by the Borough, and the Borough is the largest employer on the North Slope.

The primary land and resource manager on the North Slope of Alaska is the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Department oversees the management of land and resources within the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. During her tenure at the Department of the Interior during the first Trump Administration, Ms. MacGregor demonstrated a commitment to consult with North Slope elected leaders and residents to understand our needs and our concerns with respect to land and resource management. Ms. MacGregor understands our desire not only to protect our

environment and our subsistence way of life but also the need to responsibly develop resources in a manner that will enable our communities to survive and thrive.

We support the nomination of Ms. MacGregor to serve as Deputy Secretary of the Interior and welcome the opportunity to work with her in that role once again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "JP", is written over the printed name.

Josiah Patkotak
Mayor



April 2, 2025

The Honorable Mike Lee
Chairman
Senate Committee on Energy
& Natural Resources
363 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Energy
& Natural Resources
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Lee and Ranking Member Heinrich:

The Public Lands Council (PLC) writes to express our strong support for Katharine MacGregor's nomination to serve as the next Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior. Since 1968, PLC has been the only organization in Washington, D.C. representing the unique interest of cattle and sheep producers across the West who hold the 22,000 federal grazing permits.

Across the West, ranchers manage nearly 120 million acres of private land and hold permits to graze livestock on over 250 million acres of public land overseen, in part, by the BLM. These ranchers serve as the primary stewards of these landscapes, ensuring their health and productivity for future generations. Nearly 40% of western cattle herd and about 50% of the nation's sheep herd spend time on public lands, making continued access to these lands essential to maintain a stable domestic meat and fiber supply. Throughout her previous tenure at the Department of the Interior, MacGregor has demonstrated a deep understanding of these issues and a commitment to balancing the diverse interests of federal land users. MacGregor's nomination presents an opportunity to bring thoughtful, balanced, effective, and experienced leadership to this critical role and we urge swift action to confirm her to this position.

The Deputy Secretary of the Interior plays a critical role in ensuring that America's public lands remain accessible, sustainable, and productive. Ranchers throughout the West have a vested interest in well-managed public lands, as they work alongside federal agencies to improve rangeland health, support wildlife conservation, promote wildfire resilience, and maintain sustainable grazing practices. MacGregor's extensive experience within the Department, including her leadership on energy development, land management, and regulatory reform, uniquely qualifies her to navigate the complex challenges facing public lands. She has proven her ability to engage with diverse stakeholders, balance competing priorities, and advance policies that support both conservation and responsible land use.

Through her years of service at the Department of the Interior and her deep expertise in federal land management, MacGregor has demonstrated a commitment to multiple-use principles, ensuring that the needs of agriculture producers, energy developers, recreational users, and

conservation advocates are all considered in federal decision-making. Her leadership has fostered collaboration and driven policies that support the long-term sustainability of public lands while promoting rural communities.

The Department of Interior requires experienced leadership that understands the challenges and opportunities of managing our nation's natural resources. MacGregor's dedication to thoughtful, balanced land management will provide the Department of the Interior with a steady and knowledgeable leader. PLC supports her nomination and urges the Committee and the Senate to take swift action to confirm her to the position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tim Canterbury".

Tim Canterbury
Public Lands Council President

Los Angeles Times

Park rangers battle Australians seeking rare earth minerals in old Mojave gold mine

By **Alex Wigglesworth**

Staff Writer

Feb. 28, 2025 3 AM PT

- The National Park Service has alleged an Australian company is operating an unauthorized mine in the heart of the Mojave National Preserve
- The company and several politicians, however, claim the operations, which include rare earth mineral exploration, are permitted under approvals received decades ago

MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE, Calif. — Deep in the Mojave National Preserve lies an old open pit mine where workers dug and drilled for gold and silver from the late 1800s to the 1990s. Miners are back at the Colosseum Mine today — but now they’re also looking for rare earth minerals used in advanced technologies.

The National Park Service is trying to stop it — at least until the agency can review and sign off on the activities. It claims that the mining company, Australia’s Dateline Resources Ltd., is operating the Colosseum Mine without authorization, giving federal officials little ability to minimize environmental damage in an area ecologists say is rich with rare plants.

The mining company says it has the right to work the mine under a plan its prior operators submitted to the Bureau of Land Management more than 40 years ago.

Several elected officials are backing the company against the Park Service, pointing to the national security importance of developing America’s capacity to produce rare earth minerals, which are used in smartphones, advanced weapons and electric vehicles. [China dominates the market.](#)

“Any discussion of the mine should start with its importance to national security due to its potential to contain rare earth materials,” San Bernardino County Supervisor Paul Cook said in an email. “To my knowledge, it’s the single best opportunity in the United States to bring American rare earth production online in a timely manner and help break the Chinese Communist Party’s global monopoly.”

Environmentalists are watching closely, saying the conflict will be an early indicator of the Trump administration's policies toward commercial exploitation of public lands.

"How the Trump administration responds to the situation with Colosseum Mine will be an indicator as to how they respond to threats to our public lands in general over the next four years," said Chance Wilcox of the National Parks Conservation Assn. "Will they favor an unauthorized foreign mine or will they better support the institution that protects America's treasured landscapes?"

The Colosseum Mine sits near California's border with Nevada, about 10 miles west of Primm. Gold was first discovered there in the late 1860s and mining for it continued intermittently until 1939, later resuming in the 1980s and '90s.

The rocky shelf road leading to the mine winds through every layer of the Mojave. Desert tortoise habitat gives way to yucca- and cholla-studded hills, followed by stands of pinyon pine, juniper and white fir, interspersed with bursts of buckwheat, Mormon tea and desert lavender.

"Stunning — it's one of the most spectacular spots in the Mojave," Wilcox said on a recent afternoon as he stood on an overlook and took in views of the Clark Mountains' lush peaks. He turned and pointed to a yawning, barbed wire-ringed pit sitting beneath denuded hills. "Without the mine, all of this would've looked the same."

As gold prices soared in the 1980s, the BLM and San Bernardino County agreed to allow the mineral rights holders to resume gold mining following review under the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Mining began again in late 1987 and ceased in 1992, with milling operations coming to an end the following year, according to an Environmental Protection Agency site visit report. By then, the mine was owned by Lac Minerals Ltd., which took over responsibility for groundwater inspection and monitoring required by the local water quality control board.

The Mojave National Preserve was established in 1994, transferring oversight from the BLM to the Park Service. The Park Service notified Colliseum Inc., a subsidiary of Lac Minerals, that it could continue operations until environmental reclamation was completed, according to a 1995 letter from then-field director Stanley Albright.

After that, the letter said, the operators would have to submit a new proposed plan of operations to cover a years-long monitoring phase.

Dateline Resources took over in 2021, telling shareholders that a review of U.S. Geological Service data had revealed radiometric anomalies on the southern end of its mining claims suggesting the presence of rare earth elements.

The anomalies were similar to those documented at the nearby [Mountain Pass Rare Earth Mine](#), which is the only domestic producer of rare earth elements and provides about 16% of the world's supply, the release noted.

While the company would focus primarily on the potential for gold at the mine, it would also include rare earth elements in its planned exploration program, it announced.

The National Park Service declined to make officials available for an interview or to provide information about its discussions with the mine owners. The agency said in a statement that it is working with the Department of the Interior and the mine owners to ensure that laws are followed and the resources of the Mojave National Preserve are protected.

But hundreds of pages of letters and emails exchanged by park officials, the mine owners, their legal representatives, and county and federal officials, released in response to a Freedom of Information Act request filed by the National Parks Conservation Assn. and shared with The Times, reveal a dispute dating back several years.

The National Park Service's first contact with Dateline took place in May of 2022, when a law enforcement ranger encountered a contractor demobilizing a diamond-core drilling rig from the mine, according to correspondence from park officials. The contractor told the Park Service he'd been conducting an exploratory drilling operation for Dateline subsidiary Colosseum Rare Metals, the correspondence states.

Park Service staff later inspected the road leading to the mine and found damage from the unpermitted movement of equipment and unauthorized roadwork, according to letters from park officials. Heavy earthmoving equipment had been driven off road, large perennial shrubs were uprooted and an acre under active restoration was razed by bulldozer, the letters state.

That June, the preserve's then-superintendent, Mike Gauthier, notified Dateline managing director Stephen Baghdadi that the mine was operating without authorization. Gauthier demanded that the company cease work until it submitted an operations plan to the Park Service and won the agency's approval. This would typically give the Park Service the opportunity to analyze the environmental effects of the proposed work and add terms and conditions to conserve park resources.

A lawyer representing the company, Kerry Shapiro, responded in a November 2022 letter saying the Park Service had no basis to require permits or a new plan of operations because the activities were already authorized under existing approvals.

Shapiro said the mine would seek to restart mineral extraction activities, which were consistent with the plan for the mine approved by the BLM in 1985. The Park Service authorized that plan 10 years later when it told the mine's prior owners that they could continue existing operations until reclamation was complete, wrote Shapiro, of the law firm Jeffer Mangels Butler & Mitchell.

A regional NPS official, Frank Lands, said in a February 2023 response to Shapiro that the 1995 temporary authorization was intended to cover just a short period so that closure of the mine could be completed. That 2023 letter explicitly revoked the authorization and ordered Colosseum Rare Metals to cease and desist any activities other than water quality monitoring.

Shapiro said in a statement that Colosseum has been working for years to resolve what it feels are a series of misunderstandings by the Park Service, but that the agency's files on the mine were destroyed by water damage, hampering these efforts.

"Nevertheless, Colosseum is continuing to work to resolve these misunderstandings in its ongoing efforts in connection with this important mine site," he said.

In March of 2023, a Park Service law enforcement ranger encountered Baghdadi and a contractor on the road to the mine supervising a bulldozer and backhoe that were performing unpermitted roadwork, according to a letter the preserve's then-acting superintendent, Kelly Fuhrmann, sent to Cook, the county supervisor. The ranger told them to stop work and remove the equipment but returned the next day to find the work had gone forward, destroying hundreds of perennial plants, the letter states.

The Park Service eventually sent the mine operators and two contractors a \$213,387 bill for costs and damages stemming from the incident, along with the roadwork allegedly performed the previous May. The parties met at least once to discuss settlement, but no agreement has been reached.

Colosseum is actively disputing the allegations but does not comment on ongoing administrative proceedings, Shapiro said.

U.S. Rep. Jay Obernolte (R-Hesperia) and San Bernardino County Supervisors Dawn Rowe and Cook wrote letters in 2023 to the Park Service urging the agency to let the mine continue operating.

In a statement provided to The Times, Cook wrote that the Colosseum Mine has protected mining rights that were established long before the Park Service had any jurisdiction over the land.

“From my vantage point, the NPS actions over the past several years to deny rights at Colosseum Mine amount to unnecessary agency overreach,” Cook wrote.

Rep. Jared Huffman (D-San Rafael) said he disagreed with that legal analysis and that the mine operators should obtain approval from the Park Service. The national parks system is an intergenerational trust, and to the extent that extractive uses are allowed, there needs to be oversight to ensure such uses are sustainable, he said.

“We don’t hold these public lands so that our corporate pals can just monetize them and wreck them permanently,” he said.

Mining companies often tout the potential presence of rare earth elements to justify destructive practices, Huffman added. He pointed to the proposed Pebble Mine in Alaska, which was scrapped in 2023 after the EPA determined its waste would harm salmon fishery areas in the Bristol Bay watershed.

Wilcox of the National Parks Conservation Assn. said environmentalists are not only concerned that mining operations will damage the ecosystem, but that the disregard for the permitting and review process will also pave the way for others to do the same, particularly during a presidential administration that’s sympathetic to industry.

“Essentially, this mine is managing the destruction of one of the largest units in our national parks system, which are the crown jewels of America,” Wilcox said. “We’ve never seen anything like this.”

The Clark mountain range is one of California’s most botanically important areas, said Jim Andre, director of UC Riverside’s Granite Mountains Desert Research Center. It’s estimated to harbor the second-highest density of rare plants of any of the state’s mountain ranges, second only to the New York Mountains directly to its south, he said.

In all, about 65 plant species in the Clark Mountains are ranked as rare by the California Native Plant Society, and at least 41 of them are protected under CEQA, Andre said. By comparison, the entirety of Joshua Tree National Park — which is nearly 20 times larger — has just 45 listed plant species, he said.

Andre estimates that at least half of the mountain range’s rare plant species are directly or indirectly affected by the mining activities at Colosseum.

These plants tend to support specific, sometimes rare species of pollinators like bees, hummingbirds, butterflies and moths, Andre said. “They’re not just prized luxury items, they’re actually a functional part of the ecosystem,” he said.

And the eastern Mojave Desert is still a frontier for species discovery, meaning that scientists don’t actually have a full picture of what could be lost, he said.

“What’s concerning to me about the Colosseum Mine is that it doesn’t seem to be following a regulatory process that would provide an opportunity or requirement to even go out and do preconstruction surveys,” he said. “That’s the mystery of the activities we’re seeing right now, is that they seem to be shrugging off the due process ... and it’s happening within a national park, which is kind of astounding.”