

## Senate Energy and Natural Resources holds Arctic Opportunities Hearing

March 5, 2015

On March 5, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a hearing to evaluate opportunities for the United States to build on its status as an Arctic nation. Witnesses from the Alaskan State Legislature, the U.S. Navy, the academic community, and the commercial shipping industry gave testimony.

Admiral Robert Papp, Special Representative to the Arctic, highlighted the balance between security and environmental concerns struck by the U.S.'s proposed program for their Arctic Council chairmanship, which will take place from 2015 to 2017. Admiral Papp stated a need for investment in Arctic infrastructure, specifically icebreakers, ships specifically designed to operate in polar, icy conditions. Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Angus King (I-ME), and Lisa Murkowski (D-AK) all agreed that icebreakers are vital to support U.S. leadership in the Arctic. Senator Murkowski pointed out that Russia has 29 icebreakers and India is building one while the U.S. has only two. Senator Murkowski stated that she will present a bill that supports better charting, ice forecasting, and creates weather stations and buoys for weather and ice tracking.

Senators Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Cantwell, and King voiced support for U.S. ratification of the Law of the Sea treaty, an international agreement through the United Nations that establishes conventions governing the oceans including a process to recognize the extent of territorial waters and national claims to the continental shelf.

Alaskan representatives expressed concern regarding lack of fossil fuel energy development leading to an under-capacity of the Alaskan Pipeline. Senators Al Franken (D-MN) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT) both called out the irony of developing resources exposed by climate change that would only increase climate change and its damages.

Sources: United Nations

*Updated 4/6/15*

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