

Hearing Report

By [Ramona Lessen](#), Executive Director, Total Spectrum

Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Hearing on the presidential nomination of Gina Raimondo to be Secretary of the Department of Commerce

Tuesday, January 26, 2021; 10:00 a.m.

To view a livestream of the hearing please [click here](#).

Witness:

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Governor of Rhode Island

[Testimony](#)

Opening Statements:

Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS), Chairman

We are considering the nomination of Governor Gina Raimondo to be Secretary of the Department of Commerce. Thank you to Senator Cantwell also for holding this hearing. We thank former Secretary Ross for his service and working with me and my staff over the years. Governor Raimondo has strong professional qualifications. As an elected official and a former venture capitalist, she will bring a valuable perspective to the Department of Commerce. I look forward to hearing from Governor Raimondo for her and President Biden's goals for the Department. This confirmation is just the starting point for vital matters responding to the economic damage caused by the pandemic, investing in our people and small business, insuring that our American workers and manufacturers can compete fairly in the global market, growing the marine economy through the promotion of transportation, technological research investment promoting 5G deployment, increasing broadband rural access, improving our cyber security and elevating space commerce at the Department. I believe Governor Raimondo, as a Governor of a maritime state, understands the need for effective oceans and fisheries policies and will be a strong advocate for those industries. I appreciate that she is testifying remotely today. The Governor offered to attend in person, but after consultation with me and Senator Cantwell, we all agreed that the Governor is needed for pressing duties back in Rhode Island as she is still serving as Governor. We appreciate her willingness to accommodate us and her willingness to serve her country.

Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Ranking Member

I apologize if I go long. I want to congratulate Governor Raimondo to be Secretary of the Department of Commerce. I think her experience in the public and private sectors will be a big help to us and the Biden Administration as we work on a variety of commerce issues. Governor Raimondo's record in the public sector, working on how to empower entrepreneurs and skilled workers is exactly the skill set we need to better grow our economy. I am grateful for her understanding of the ocean, fisheries and importance of investing in science. This will greatly help us at the Department of Commerce where the budget oversight is a big task of the Department. We have a dozen members of the Committee who these maritime issues are so important to their states, so her background is very important. I hope that she will speak out today in opposition of any censorship of scientific information of NOAA and that she fully expects to listen to the scientists regarding these issues. We can't always agree on the issues, but we can agree on the science. That's why science needs to continue to prevail. We need smart strategies on

salmon recovery, storm water and habitat investments, worker population, stock assessment and fish management strategies which will help save that industry. 2018 commercial fisherman caught 9.8 billion pounds of seafood supporting seafood processors, shipbuilders, creating restaurant jobs and expanded fishing trips which boosted our outdoor recreation economy.

The other area is spectrum and weather forecasting. We should be a leader in weather forecasting - an important issue. Making a better crucial investment in the science for maritime, aviation, agriculture and space industries will be very important for us. Over the last four years, the FCC ran roughshod over concerns raised by various committees within Congress on these air wave issues related to weather data and Ligado. We are hoping the Secretary will help prioritize these issues as we move forward to get everyone on the same page. I hope the Secretary will work on these national security issues going forward concerning our communication system. It is imperative that the infrastructure be secure.

The Secretary will inherit a new program as part of the COVID bill, the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program. In 2019, an FCC report found that less than half of houses in Indian country had access to highspeed broadband services — a 20% gap from non-Indian areas. Key responsibilities at the department will be in response to COVID and what we should do about it. I hope the Secretary will play an important role in strengthening our economy. This is a critical job of the Commerce Secretary. Seafood exports have dropped by 31% since 2020 and 44% since Feb of 2020. All of our sectors have been impacted. Regarding manufacturing, Sen Moran and I are interested in keeping the aerospace manufacturing sector going at a time when we see a decrease in demand. Minority owned businesses have been greatly impacted by the pandemic and have received less open support and the Minority Business Development is an agency that can help focus us on these issues.

The Department of Commerce has a leadership role regarding competitiveness in our nation. 1 in 4 jobs in my state are related to trade. I hope we will continue to move our trade export advancement - a great way to increase our economy. Lastly the census - we don't need politicization - we need accurate information. We need to get this right. I hope we will have a less political process moving forward.

All of these are big agenda items, but I'm confident that your experience will help us.