



Committee: Full Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee

Event: [Full Committee Hearing to Consider Pending Nominations](#)

Date: June 23, 2026

Executive Summary:

The Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on June 23, 2026, to evaluate the pending nominations for positions within the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Department of Energy (DOE).

- There was bipartisan support for the America the Beautiful Act ([S. 1547](#)) and agreement that the U.S. must find ways to strengthen the economy of U.S. territories and freely associated states.
- Republicans argued against timed-entry systems for national parks, expressed a desire to delist grizzly bears from the conservation list, and expressed concern over protecting energy technologies and laboratories from foreign adversaries.
- Democrats argued in support of timed-entry systems for national parks and expressed concerns regarding a backlog of grant reviews, as well as cuts to department budgets and staff.

Member Toplines:

*Chair Mike Lee (R-UT)*¹: Lee expressed his support for each of the nominees. Lee voiced his displeasure with timed-entry policies that limit citizens from entering national parks, and advocated for reforming Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act* (NHPA) to reduce red tape on improving recreation areas.

Ranking Member Martin Heinrich (D-NM): Heinrich expressed disapproval towards President **Donald Trump's** administration for leaving these positions vacant since the beginning of his term; he also critiqued the nominees' lack of timeliness in filling out the Committee's questionnaire. He also questioned each of the nominees' credentials, citing concern with what he described as a lack of relevant backgrounds. While he raised concerns, he did not formally oppose the nominations.

Witness Toplines:

[William Hague, Nominee to be an Assistant Secretary for Insular, International and Ocean Affairs \(IIOA\), DOI](#): Hague highlighted his goals to strengthen the relationship between Americans in the Pacific and Caribbean and grow their wealth and security, through unleashing free market principles. He emphasized the importance of addressing economic challenges and promoting democratic resilience to protect the territories and freely associated states from foreign

¹ Written testimony was not available for Chair Mike Lee and Ranking Member Martin Heinrich at the time of this memo's distribution.

influences. Hague stated that he will work to advance the priorities of the Trump administration through removing barriers to economic prosperity, protecting U.S. national security, increasing financial accountability, and improving energy affordability.

[Kevin Lilly, Nominee to be Assistant Secretary for Fish & Wildlife & Parks, DOI](#): Lilly emphasized that he will focus on: keeping the National Park Service (NPS) properly staffed; supporting the Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) to sustain healthy habitats; and confronting the deferred-maintenance backlog. He stated his commitment to working with state, tribal, local partners, and gateway communities to advance both conservation and access.

[Kaveh Farzad, Nominee to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy for the Office of International Affairs, DOE](#): Farzad highlighted his career in public service, pointing to his role focusing on energy public diplomacy at the State Department's Bureau of Energy Resources and DOE's Office of International Affairs. He outlined three strategic priorities: implementing President Trump's vision of American energy dominance as a global stabilizing force, ensuring the U.S. is working in unity with allies and partners, and broadening energy access. He emphasized the importance of these goals in building American energy dominance to ensure global stability.

Major Takeaways:

William Hague's Nomination:

- Chair Lee questioned Hague on the potential development of a deep-sea mining and critical minerals revenue-sharing agreement with American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, and Guam, under the right policy framework, citing the *Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act* as an example worth replicating. Ranking Member Heinrich raised concerns about territorial and community support for deep-sea mining.
 - Hague expressed a desire to develop a framework and alluded to discussions he has had with key representatives on preparing legislation.
 - Hague noted that finding a balance between potential environmental impacts and economic development is important and acknowledged that it is necessary to learn more about deep-sea mining before advancing.
- Ranking Member Heinrich and Sen. **Mazie Hirono** (D-HI) raised concerns about the staffing of positions within the IIOA, and the importance of field representatives in compact states.
 - Hague explained that the IIOA is currently working through listing positions and navigating the federal hiring process. He reinforced his commitment to have field representatives in each of the compact states.

Kevin Lilly's Nomination:

- Chair Lee thanked Lilly for the work he has done as Acting Secretary. During his period for questions, Chair Lee spoke about the promises of a potential permitting reform deal to enhance the Glen Canyon Recreation Area, specifically Lake Powell.
 - Lilly advocated for NHPA reform and emphasized the need to be innovative in improving accessibility to utilize the full lake.
- Ranking Member Heinrich, Sen. Hirono, and Sen. **Alex Padilla** (D-CA) pressured Lilly to articulate his stance on further FWS and NPS staffing cuts. These Members also

questioned Lilly regarding the slow review of over 1,400 community-based grants totalling over \$360,000,000 in projects.

- Lilly highlighted new local and seasonal hiring policies as a way to reach optimal levels of coverage. He also expressed frustration with the cumbersome nature of hiring for federal employment.
- Lilly also stated the importance of providing a thorough review of all grants and emphasized his desire to work in collaboration with policy management groups.
- Sen. **Steve Daines** (R-MT) asked for Lilly's commitment to quickly sort through the deferred-maintenance backlog as soon as the America the Beautiful Act's companion, the Great American Outdoors Act 250 ([H.R. 9250](#)), passes out of the House. Lilly pledged his commitment.

Kaveh Farzad's Nomination:

- Sen. **John Hoeven** (R-ND) questioned Farzad on how he will support North Dakota's "Crack the Code 2.0" enhanced oil recovery (EOR) technology program.
 - Farzad emphasized the importance of accelerating EOR programs in the U.S. first, citing the potential benefits in exporting this know-how to allies and reducing reliance on oil from foreign adversaries.
- Sen. Padilla informed Farzad that he would be providing questions for the record on proposed regulations following his Fusion Energy Act of 2024 ([S. 4151](#)), concerning consistency and alignment with international partners.
- Sen. **John Barrasso** (R-WY) focused on the exportation of Wyoming coal and the Western Terminal Gateway project.
 - Farzad stressed that coal has been the backbone of global electricity and that the U.S. is a net exporter of coal. Farzad highlighted that as a result of the supply chain constraints through the Strait of Hormuz, the markets for coal are ripe. Farzad applauded President Trump's investments to improve export pathways.