



**U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE & TRANSPORTATION**  
*Senator Maria Cantwell, Chair*

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**U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell**

**Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee**

**Executive Session: Nominations**

**December 12, 2024**

**Opening Remarks**

**VIDEO**

The Commerce Committee will come to order. Today, the Commerce Committee is in Executive Session to advance four nominations to the Amtrak Board of Directors, two nominees to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting Directors, a nomination for the Marine Mammal Commission, and a nomination for the Federal Maritime Commission, and several promotions in the United States Coast Guard.

Earlier this month, Amtrak [ridership] reached an all-time high, surpassing its records before COVID-19, and this Committee made important changes to the Board in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to ensure that oversight of Amtrak and that it meets the needs of passengers and individual ridership.

Today, we make those reforms a reality. We added a disability advocate to the Board to ensure Amtrak considers the needs of all passengers. Today, we are considering Mr. Capozzi, a longtime advocate with transportation experience.

And after Amtrak tried to eliminate the Southwest Chief Service and dragged its feet on restoration of the Gulf Coast route, we worked together to ensure the Board had representation outside the Northeast Corridor to ensure that Amtrak focused on the needs of the entire country.

I want to thank my both Democrat and Republican colleagues for that advocacy, including Senator Tester, who asked President Biden to make sure that we complied with this.

Today, we are considering three nominees from the West, Mr. Batory, Ms. Clegg and Mr. Chen. If we confirm these nominees, it will be the first time [in nearly a decade] that the

Senate has confirmed a majority of members. But we look forward to the Trump nominees as we see them coming through, I'm sure in January and February.

Also, two nominations to the Board of Directors for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. They play a vital role in access to commercial, high-quality content on our airwaves.

Felix Sanchez, of District of Columbia, Chairman of the National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts, has been a critical voice for the inclusion and promotion of Latina voices in the entertainment industry, and over the years, his advocacy in this regard has yielded great results.

Adam White, of Virginia, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, has served on the Boards of Directors of various nonprofits focused on conservation of free speech and preserving the rule of law, and he has previously served on the Presidential Commission on the Supreme Court of the United States.

Lisa Ballance, of Oregon, has been nominated to be a Member of the Marine Mammal Commission. Dr. Ballance is the Director of Oregon State University's Marine Mammal Institute, Endowed Chair of the Marine Mammal research, and Professor of Fisheries in the Wildlife and Conservation Species Department. Dr. Ballance also served in roles at NOAA and studied ecology and conservation of marine mammals for more than 30 years.

Louis Sola, of Florida, has been nominated to be a Federal Maritime Commission member again, where he has served since 2019. Our Committee, through the Ocean Shipping Reform Act, worked hard to ensure the FMC has the tools it needs to ensure ocean carriers play fair and don't leave American grown products on the docks. The Commission already has one vacancy, and failing to act on his nomination would deprive it of another member, and would only reduce our capacity.

Finally, we consider 291 promotions to the United States Coast Guard. I want to highlight the promotions of Paul Miller and Kris Ensley to Captain, both who served this Committee as fellows, and want to thank them for their leadership. Paul worked on the Committee for two different occasions and on the Bipartisan Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2024 and we congratulate the fellows on their well-deserved promotion.

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Senator Cruz, because of what you just said, I wasn't sure this is our last hearing. We may end up in the new year having something on those nominees, but thank you so much for those comments, and thank you for recognizing—I'll have at a later time more to say in turning over the gavel to you and congratulating you on that leadership, and look forward to working with you.

I do think it is an appropriate time to thank the members of the Committee who will no longer be serving here. And you're right. They have all added a great deal of input to

this Committee. Senator Tester, as I mentioned earlier, working on Amtrak and many other issues, particularly in the Chips and Science area.

And Senator Sinema on so much energy into our FAA Reauthorization bill and aviation manufacturing in general. Very much appreciated.

And yes, I guess that this is an opening. Do we all get to call the Vice President [Senator Vance] on Commerce issues that we want done at the White House, maybe. So I very much appreciate those comments. We'll have more to say on working with you in the new year, but I agree with the sentiments. Definitely want to work with you, and think we did demonstrate that and look forward to that leadership.