



Hastings Remarks at PNWA Mid-Year Meeting

Campbell's Resort
104 West Woodin
Chelan, WA 98816-9715
1:00 – 2:00 pm
06-29-09

Good afternoon to all the members of the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association gathered here today. It's a pleasure to be able to join you at your mid-year meeting. I'd like to give a special thanks to Glenn Vanselow for having me here this afternoon and for moderating the question and answer period coming up.

Whether your individual focus is on ports or agriculture products, transportation or irrigation, energy or forest products...as members of the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association you collectively play a major role in creating jobs and growing our region's economy.

As everyone knows, our national economy is hurting. Good people are being laid off, homes are being lost, pension plans and 401ks have taken huge hits, and recent college graduates are having to find work wherever they can get it, if they can at all.

So, today I want to talk to you about a few issues that are critical to our economy here in the Northwest and to your ability to be successful.

First and foremost, it has become crystal clear in recent months that the movement by extreme special interest groups, a federal judge in Portland, and some in Congress to tear out the Snake River dams is alive and well.

As you know, dam removal would have devastating consequences on our region. It would cost thousands of jobs, destroy our economy, lead to large increases in greenhouse gas emissions, and there is no solid science that it will aid salmon recovery.

Northwest residents understand that we can protect our clean, renewable hydropower dams and recover salmon at the same time.

After the last Administration took dam removal off the table our region began an unprecedented level of collaboration and agreement that brought together all federal agencies, three states and the major Indian tribes.

Regional interests have made varied concessions to come to an agreement so that we can move forward with a recovery plan that is predictable. However, instead of moving forward with a BiOp supported by nearly all parties involved, Judge Redden has chosen

to fight for the interests of dam removal extremists who are funding the never ending lawsuit.

I strongly oppose this action, dam removal should not be put back on the table in any form, not even as a contingency plan. And, I made my thoughts known to NOAA Administrator Lubchenco just recently.

Unfortunately, this Democrat-politician-turned-activist-judge has now guaranteed that the BiOp will once again be treated as a political hot potato. The judge needs to stop legislating and let the BiOp go forward. If the door to dam removal is opened even a crack, I fear it's certain we'll see an unraveling of progress and disintegration into a pitched dispute that will last years.

And, while Judge Redden is taking every step possible to tear out the Snake River dams, I must point out that federal law doesn't allow dam removal and no judge can rewrite the law.

Only Congress has the authority to authorize dam removal and as the top Republican on the Natural Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over federal hydropower, you can be certain I'll do everything in my power to stop any such extreme action.

While tearing out the Snake River dams has never made any sense, it is even more difficult to understand the logic used by dam removal advocates when considered in the context of the ongoing debate over climate change.

If capturing the energy of the wind blowing and the sun shining is renewable, then so is water running downhill. The Pacific

Northwest is the least carbon-emitting part of our nation thanks to

the dams that produce massive amounts of clean, renewable, emissions free power.

This brings me to the next issue that will without question have a profound impact on you and on our economy – the ongoing debate in Congress on a cap and trade national energy tax.

We face no greater challenge than ensuring an adequate energy supply for our economy and reducing our dependence on foreign oil. But, on Friday night, the House of Representative passed a cap and trade bill that fails to achieve these goals and succeeds only in creating a new energy tax, driving up energy costs and sending American jobs overseas.

If you are like most Americans, you are probably thinking that you have heard about this on the news, but don't know what it really means.

At its most basic, cap and trade is a regulatory scheme to set an arbitrary limit on the total amount of emissions in the United States and impose a massive new national energy tax on literally every sector of our economy.

It's as if those who control Congress and wrote this bill are living in a fantasyland where unemployment isn't reaching 10 percent...thousands haven't lost their homes to foreclosure...and millions haven't witnessed half of their 401k's and retirement savings disappear.

By imposing a national energy tax, our economy will shrink in size, millions of jobs will be lost, energy costs will, to use the President's own word, 'skyrocket', and gas prices will again reach record highs.

Whatever your views on global climate trends, everyone wants cleaner air. But this plan would cripple our economy without taking into account the exploding pollution levels of rapidly expanding countries like China and India.

We're told America must lead by example, and then the rest of the world will follow. Are we to believe that after the federal government drives America's economy further into the gutter, the rest of world will do the same? America should not be the first lemming to jump off the cliff just because Nancy Pelosi and Al Gore are convinced that China, India, Russia and others will follow us over the ledge.

And what would the House-passed bill do with the hundreds of billions of dollars taxed away from families and businesses?

Shockingly, it would give away billions in foreign aid. In fact, this

bill pays four times as much in foreign aid than it provides to the over two and half million Americans who will lose their jobs because of this bill.

We don't need the biggest job-killing tax in history to reduce carbon emissions and put in place cleaner energy sources.

What our country actually needs is an all-of-the-above approach that says yes to nuclear power, yes to alternative energy, yes to wind and solar power, yes to energy from wood-waste and biomass, yes to hydropower, and, yes to opening more areas to drilling for oil and natural gas in America to reduce our vulnerability to spikes in prices at the pump because of turmoil in overseas oil nations. And, I am a cosponsor and supporter of a bill in Congress that would do just that. Unfortunately, those who control Congress refuse to allow a yes-or-no vote on that plan.

This Congress has also been denied the opportunity to even consider pending trade agreements with Colombia, South Korea and Panama.

Many of you play a major role in transporting American-made products across the nation and overseas. With one in three Washington jobs tied to international trade, our state's economy depends on providing American farmers and businesses with fair access to foreign markets whether it's tree fruits to Central America, potatoes to Mexico, or beef to Japan.

In addition to pressing for action on pending trade agreements, I am working to ensure full funding for the Market Access Program, which is aimed at opening new export markets for U.S. agriculture.

I'm pressing the Administration to resolve the ongoing dispute with Mexico over trucks that if allowed to continue will put our potato growers out of business and cost pear and cherry producers millions.

And, I'm working with the Transportation Security Administration and my colleagues in Congress to make certain that the appropriate tools are in place as a new 100 percent cargo screening requirement goes into effect so that perishable products like cherries are not damaged and delayed.

I mention these issues because our region's economy is so fundamentally rooted in our agriculture economy. Blocking trade opportunities has far reaching consequences, for those of you here today, and for virtually every sector of our economy.

Finally, I would like to update you on my new role as the top Republican on the Natural Resources Committee. This post offers me a new opportunity to make a real difference for families and communities in the Pacific Northwest and throughout rural America.

The Committee has jurisdiction over the Bonneville Power Administration, the Bureau of Reclamation...including the Columbia Basin Project and the Yakima Project...public land use, federal hydropower, endangered species reform and federal forests, And, we play a role on formulating our nation's energy policy.

My focus on the Committee is striking a balance between protecting our nation's natural treasures and spurring economic recovery through the wise use of our energy, water, mineral and other resources.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association as Central Washington's representative in Congress – and now in my role on the Natural Resources Committee.

Again, thank you for inviting me. I'd be happy to take any questions.