

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION**

Full Committee

Nominations Hearing

Wednesday, October 22, 2025 at 10:30 A.M.

DEMOCRATIC QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Ms. Laura DiBella

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SENATOR MARIA CANTWELL (D-WA)

Jones Act. A long-standing tool to protect the U.S. maritime industry is the Jones Act, which requires that water-borne cargo carried between domestic ports must be on U.S. flag, U.S. built, and U.S. crewed ships. The Jones Act fleet consists of approximately 40,000 vessels, supports 650,000 American family wage jobs, and contributes more than \$150 billion to the national economy annually.

Question 1: Do you support the Jones Act?

Answer: Yes, I do.

Lower Costs for Consumers. In 2022, Congress's Ocean Shipping Reform Act gave the Commission a shot in the arm providing additional authorities to go after bad actors, self-initiate investigations, boost enforcement, and lower costs for American consumers. Since OSRA was signed into law, we have yet to see the Commission use this power to increase investigations into bad actors.

Question 1: As a Commissioner, what will you do to drive down costs for consumers?

Answer: As a Commissioner, I will get to the heart of every matter that keeps costs high in terms of shipping, seeing through to swift completion several efforts that are currently under investigation, for example:

Chokepoint interference keeps shipping costs high because disruptions to these narrow waterways lead to significant delays, mandatory rerouting, and increased operational expenses like fuel and insurance which are ultimately passed down to the consumer.

Flags of Convenience, although in principle are designed to keep costs low, have the potential to result in higher overall risks to the supply chain due to lax oversight, potentially leading to safety and reliability issues. Reduced oversight could lead to catastrophic incidents that could compromise the supply chain and have a disastrous effect on the U.S. consumer's bottom line.

Stymying the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Net Zero vote that was recently delayed until 2026 is critical to driving down costs as the implementation of the Net Zero Framework will not only increase costs across the board due to the need to retrofit and accommodate new fuel types on vessels, it also greatly benefits China's shipbuilding capacity as they dominate the market. It is a win-win for them and lose-lose for basically everyone else.

Question 2: Will you support efforts to increase investigations by the Commission?

Answer: Yes, I will.

Question 3: How will you address cargo diversion to ensure that American ports will continue to be a preferred customer?

Answer: Addressing the Harbor Maintenance Tax loophole along with cargo preference laws (i.e. Jones Act, American Cargo for American Ships Act) would combat this immediately. In tandem with this, a combination of robust infrastructure investment and enhancements throughout the system (which is how we need to view this) would ensure supply chain visibility and better collaboration with all involved to help develop contingency plans in the face of disruptions.

Independent Agencies. President Trump has illegally fired over 25 Members from independent Boards and Commissions this year, including at the FTC, NTSB, CPSC, and STB. Like those agencies, Congress created the FMC to be independent, and we should all expect its Commissioners to maintain their independence.

Question 1: Do you believe in the importance of bipartisanship on independent boards and commissions like the FMC?

Answer: Yes, I do.

Question 2: Yes or No: Will you commit to maintaining the independence of the FMC as Congress intended, if confirmed?

Answer: Yes, I will.

Question 3: Yes or No: If the President or anyone else in this Administration threatened to fire you unless you took an action you disagreed with, would you refuse?

Answer: I do not believe the President would ask me to do so; if confirmed, I pledge to uphold the law.

Rail Merger/Connections to Ports. Awareness of the broader freight transportation market is important to performing the role of an FMC Commissioner.

Question 1: Are you concerned about the effects of consolidation in the US domestic rail market as it relates to the competitiveness of our ports and lowering costs of maritime shipping?

Answer: Consolidation of any kind will have impacts, potentially both good and bad, and, if I am confirmed, I would appreciate hearing more about the impacts from the industry to ensure that competition remains high among our ports, along with costs remaining low in maritime shipping.

Question 2: What information do you think would be helpful to the Federal Maritime Commission and the Surface Transportation Board to have from the railroads to better understand the impact of the proposed merger on our ports and American businesses exporting goods abroad?

Answer: Understanding the type of cargo and ultimate destination of the cargo is where the conversation must begin as that will outline the current system in place and then help ascertain how the merger could rearrange the current supply chain and thus, its impacts on ports and American exporters.

SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH (D-IL)

Federal Elections

1. Setting aside the Congressional count and certification, do you believe President Donald Trump received more votes than Vice President Kamala Harris in the 2024 U.S. presidential election?

Answer: Congress certified that Donald Trump won the 2024 election on January 6, 2025.

2. Setting aside the official Congressional count and certification, do you believe President Joe Biden received more votes than President Donald Trump in the 2020 U.S. presidential election?

Answer: Congress certified that Joe Biden won the 2020 presidential election on January 7, 2021.