

Senator Cantwell Q&A
Hearing for NASA and Commerce Nominees
Wednesday, December 3, 2025
[\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sorry, I had to step out for a minute and take a call from another Member. But I just want to make sure I heard everything you just said correctly on this. So when Secretary Duffy as the Acting [Administrator] announced NASA would reopen to compete Artemis III Human Lander to ensure America would reach the lunar surface in 2028 -- you agree with that decision, and will you fully commit to this re-competition?

Mr. Isaacman: Well, Senator, I mean both, both SpaceX and Blue Origin were already awarded contracts through a competitive process to build the lander, and I don't think it was lost on either one of those organizations that the first company that is capable of delivering a lander to take American astronauts to the lunar surface and back is the one that this nation is going to go with. I think that competition is fantastic. I think the best thing for SpaceX is a Blue Origin right on their heels and vice versa.

Sen. Cantwell: Great. Well, we're glad they re-competed. And when I first became Ranking Member of the Committee, we argued for the redundancy of competition. There's nothing like competition to get the product that we need. And I think the decision that was made was based on the urgency to return by 2028 -- so you believe in that process?

Mr. Isaacman: Senator, I absolutely agree with competition. I think we need competition for the vendors that support NASA's critical mission. I think competition among world powers is actually a really good thing, just as long as we don't lose.

Sen. Cantwell: Okay. The R&D issue about hi-rate composites I mentioned in my opening statement -- the HiCAM project, which does have NASA's support in trying to generate more composites. We have -- with Idaho -- established a Tech Hub in thermoplastics. And I really believe that the United States should not lose this race for high-rate composite manufacturing. Will you fight to keep NASA's aeronautic budget to sufficiently fund such HiCAM operations and support the technology development that is needed for aerospace materials [manufacturing]?

Mr. Isaacman: Senator, I think it's squarely in the responsibility of the aeronautics portion of NASA to work on the absolute cutting-edge materials that will ensure the competitiveness of our aeronautics industry well into the future.

Sen. Cantwell: Okay, and then how can you further leverage NASA's university work for development and research?

Mr. Isaacman: I think, I mean, there's a couple parts to that, Senator. First, I think in general, it's part of NASA's responsibility towards inspiration and STEM education to award grants to academic institutions that give students hands on opportunities with hardware -- ideally inspire them to want to graduate and either work at NASA or contribute to industry. Also, I just think it's a great way to, you know, crack the code on important research that's going to bubble up towards NASA achieving its important objectives.

Sen. Cantwell: Okay, thank you. And Mr. Haines, how do we get this supply chain -- onshoring, or supply chain materials -- similar to the same subject [of Tech Hubs]. One of the reasons I became

interested in the Tech Hub is actually an Idaho employer came to me and said, “Do you understand the Europeans are trying to buy us?” And I was like, “No, I didn't understand that.” And he said, “Yes, everybody's looking for the best technology, and they see it in our country and they want to buy it.” And we're not doing it and creating the supply chain. So how do you in think this job and role, you can help improve supply chain identifications for America's competitiveness, particularly in manufacturing?

Mr. Haines: Thank you, Senator. One word simply is mapping. We're doing this across a wide variety of sectors, critical minerals is one. Mine to market is a term that we use often. We have to understand the supply chain, understand where their choke points are, if any. There're two components within industry analysis that do supply chain analysis. The trade policy analysis, or TPA division, as well as the supply chain center. There's a good amount of overlap there. If confirmed, one of my sole focuses is going to super-charge our analytic capabilities. Bring some in-house, currently out-of-house tools in-house, to be able to answer specific questions just like that, and to be able to have a little bit more ball control in terms of mapping and analyzing supply chains.

Sen. Cantwell: And do you look at this issue as a true competition issue with China and other countries to make sure that we are mapping these supply chains?

Mr. Haines: It absolutely is. It's a competitive issue across the board. I would say yes. Senator.

Sen. Cantwell: Okay. And then there is legislation sponsored by myself, [Senators] Blackburn, Blunt Rochester and Young on promoting resilient supply chains. Will you look at that and tell us whether you can support that legislation?

Mr. Haines: I have looked at it. We provided an initial T.A. and if passed, I'd be happy to implement it to the fullest extent and work with Committee to do so.

Sen. Cantwell: Do you see any problems with it now?

Mr. Haines: I'd have to read the bill over again. The current text is escaping me, but I'm happy to do that.

Sen. Cantwell: For the record, that would be great. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

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