

US Senator Maria Cantwell Opening Remarks

Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Executive Session on Confirmation of Arielle Roth for NTIA Administrator

April 9th, 2025

[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for making that wonderful announcement about Arielle and her family. It was a delight to have her and her husband and her children in the audience, probably one of the most delightful moments that the Committee has had in watching them. And we certainly congratulate her and her family.

Let me address the Roth nomination this morning for [Assistant] Secretary of Communications and Information at the Department of Commerce. When Ms. Roth was before the Committee and gave opening remarks, I did think that we would get more of an NTIA commitment on critical issues for U.S. leadership and for inter-agency wrangling, because inter-agency wrangling is definitely a big part of NTIA's mission to get us a clear spectrum policy.

Unfortunately, at the hearing, I didn't hear a commitment, explicitly or even theoretically, to the investments that this Committee has already made. I know this is probably a frustration to many of my colleagues, but this is what we're asking of nominees throughout the Congress now, because we have a very clear idea about what is getting cut.

I have long advocated for a more evidence-based approach to our spectrum management policy. The first Trump Administration rushed to bring spectrum to the commercial market, I believe, without some of the studies and interagency coordination. And this approach put federal capabilities at risk. Aviation safety, when aircraft altimeters and 5G interfered with one another; weather forecasting, when 5G deployment interfered with 24Ghz band detections of water droplets; GPS systems; vehicle safety; and our military's readiness and capabilities.

So I believe the next NTIA administrator must not repeat those avoidable mistakes of the past.

[...] Beyond domestic concerns, America's leadership in spectrum is key to protecting our national security, our ability to innovate. To maintain that position [as] the world's cutting-edge technology [hub], we need a fully coordinated national strategy that balances our domestic priorities and projects our U.S. leadership in the International World Radio Conference and the Telecommunications Union.

So while I agree we need to bring more spectrum to market, independent studies need to be completed so that we have the full understanding of the potential impacts to our national security and public safety. Ms. Roth was not clear about this -- whether she would wait for the results of an ongoing evidence-based spectrum band with critical national security and public safety uses before making those decisions on spectrum reallocation.

Specifically, when I asked Ms. Roth about respecting the process for ongoing studies of the Lower 3Ghz, 7 and 8Ghz bands that have been heavily discussed and debated in recent years, she did not commit. And so I am concerned about these national security issues.

Spectrum management is just one of the issues where I felt like we could have had more clarity. Obviously, Mr. Chairman, you're bringing up the federal grant programs under NTIA. [Ms. Roth was] asked by many of the committee members about preserving the \$42 billion lawfully allocated to states,

tribes and territories under the BEAD program, which Congress enacted to connect all unserved and underserved households to affordable, reliable, high-speed [internet] access. Ms. Roth refused to commit to honor the agreements that NTIA has already made with states and tribes.

There are great concerns on the investments that our Congress has already decided. She had the opportunity to continue to answer those questions for the record – we do not see the evidence of that commitment. I also – on the issue of Elon Musk and conflicts of interest and making sure that even potential conflicts of interest were clear – I also have concerns.

So Mr. Chairman, at this point in time, I cannot support Ms. Roth's nomination to be the Director of NTIA.