



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, & TRANSPORTATION

Senator Maria Cantwell

**U.S. Senate Committee on Science, Commerce, and Transportation
Hearing: Nomination for Admiral Linda Fagan to be Commandant of the U.S.
Coast Guard**

Witness: Admiral Linda Fagan

April 28, 2022

Opening Statement

[VIDEO](#)

CANTWELL: The Senate Commerce on Science and Transportation Committee will come to order. Today we are having a hearing on the nomination of Admiral Linda L. Fagan to be the Commandant of the United States Coast Guard. So welcome to Admiral Fagan.

Admiral Fagan assumed the role of Vice Commandant on June 18, 2021, where she executes the commandant strategic intent, manages international operations, and serves as a lead acquisition officer overseeing the largest modernization of the coastal fleet since World War II.

She has served in the Coast Guard for nearly 36 years, and beginning her career as a sailor on the Polar Star, a 399-foot polar icebreaker, which has since served on all seven continents.

She has led numerous leadership and safety positions, including as Commander for the New York sector, more than 15 years as the marine inspector, and recently as the commander of the Pacific area in charge of Coast Guard operations and personnel on the West Coast and Indo-Pacific.

She has extensive interagency and intergovernmental experience, having worked with the International Maritime Organization, the International Labor Organization, and she has an impressive science background with a Bachelor's degree in marine science, something everybody is excited about here, from the Coast Guard Academy and two Master's degrees, one of which is from the University of Washington and Marine Affairs, which we're very proud of.

And so she is the longest-serving active duty marine officer and has earned numerous distinctions across her years of service.

But beyond that, beyond that impressive resume, this is a historic moment for our country and for women in the armed services. It will be the first time that a woman will lead one of the six branches of the armed services.

So I am hoping that your leadership will also will lead to more progress on getting women recruited and retained in the Coast Guard. That with your help and focus on important issues, like child care, health care, and education that "Coasties," like your daughter, can have a long career in the Coast Guard.

So we are excited about this historic moment and so glad to have you and your daughters here. And thank you so much for your willingness to serve our country and now I'll turn to my colleague.

Question and Answer 1

VIDEO

CANTWELL: Admiral Fagan, one of the issues obviously that's brought even more attention and focus since Russia's invasion of Ukraine is the Arctic and the importance of being able to have icebreakers to move through the Arctic. The Arctic Security Cutter, the next class of medium icebreakers, will be critically important to Americans' interest in the Arctic region. What is the Coast Guard doing to speed up the acquisition of the Arctic Security Cutter?

FAGAN: Thank you, Chair. We're obviously focused on the Polar Security Cutter and are really excited about the opportunity to build and operate the Polar Security Cutter for the nation. And as we now, you know, are on budget and moving forward that acquisition, we're working now to determine the requirements and capabilities that are needed for an Arctic Security Cutter.

I share the same sense of urgency as the Committee that as a nation, we need that capacity and ships in the Arctic. We're an Arctic nation and creating that presence is important as we move forward.

CANTWELL: Would you say we're under resourced at the moment?

FAGAN: We are on a trajectory that gets us the Polar Security Cutters. The time, the need is now and we need to continue with a sense of urgency to build those ships to ensure that we can protect our own national sovereignty as it pertains to the Arctic.

CANTWELL: Well, I think compared to where the Russians are, and the interest that we've shown in this level of aggression, I think you have to assume that there could be other aggressions. And clearly having claims to the Arctic as we do and other countries do. I think we need to get these resources in place.

Another resource issue, the Columbia River Bar has been referred to as, "The Graveyard of the Pacific." And you've been out there. You know how dangerous those waters are. I appreciate that you'd like to take me out on one of the 52-foot motor lifeboats not sure I'm ready to go. You'll have to pick a very calm day on these heavy-duty vessels, but the Columbia River does support about \$24 billion in shipping activities. So getting more safety vessels like the 52-foot motor lifeboats because of their inability to operate now is critical. So what will you do to support the 52-foot motor lifeboat?

FAGAN: Chair, thank you. The 52-foot motor lifeboats were taken out of service because of overall safety and reliability issues. They were no longer safe for our crews to operate and did not meet the safety requirements for the mariners that we would use to save and tow.

I'm committed to replacing the 52s. We're working hard on the requirements and identifying what asset we can move to, to replace the 52. I share your sense of urgency to mitigate the gap when the 52s came out of service, we've added additional 47 assets but understand that is not the final solution. And we look forward to working with the Committee to being in position to acquire and field replacements for the 52s.

CANTWELL: Thank you. And lastly, I heard you say that when you recruit a "Coastie" but you retain a family. So I know that you get that the Coast Guard needs to have these additional issues to make sure that we are an inclusive and supportive environment. What are you going to do to work on child care issues for Coast Guard families?

FAGAN: Childcare is a critical, critical issue and need for Coast Guard families. Having access to quality childcare is one of the primary needs for many of our families. I'm committed to working with the Committee to ensure that Coast Guard members have access to childcare. We're excited about some of the Child Development Centers that are being built. And really excited about the subsidies that the Committee has helped support. It allows a flexible ability for families to meet those childcare needs. And obviously, health care is also important for families as they serve our nation.

CANTWELL: Since obviously you have a big footprint in Seattle. Are you committed to getting good facilities there for the Seattle Coast Guard community?

FAGAN: So we're excited about what's going on in Seattle. We look forward to working with you to ensure that childcare is a primary area of focus as we move to homeport the Polar Security Cutters there. And look forward to working with you and making sure that Coast Guard families have access to the child care that they need.

CANTWELL: Thank you.

Question and Answer 2 **VIDEO**

Cantwell: I intend to just ask a couple of quick questions. I don't know if Senator Baldwin -- if you have a second follow up question or not.

But I wanted to get your commitment, obviously, the Southern Resident Orcas are a very big part of sustainability issues for us in Puget Sound.

Vessel noise has been identified by NOAA scientists as a significant threat facing that endangered population. Will you commit to work with us on a system for Puget Sound,

similar to what the Canadian Coast Guard has established, to reduce vessel strikes, noise impacts, and other issues?

Admiral Fagan: We remain committed to working with you on the issue of preservation of the killer whales as it pertains to Puget Sound.

Cantwell: But on noise reduction plans?

Admiral Fagan: Absolutely committed to those conversations.

Cantwell: Thank you.

In the last Coast Guard Reauthorization Act, we included a provision to allow fishermen to use technology to mark their nets. This will reduce pollution and help fishermen with fish sustainability.

The FCC is slow at working this rulemaking with the Coast Guard, so will you work with all of those interests; the FCC, fishermen, and others to get this done?

Admiral Fagan: We're committed to working with the process to move that issue forward.

Cantwell: Okay.