

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell
Q&A at Subcommittee Hearing
“AI’ve Got a Plan: America’s AI Action Plan”
September 10, 2025
[\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Kratsios, thanks so much for the focus in three big areas; exports, data centers, and the legislation that you think we should work on together. So really appreciate the fact that your recommendations call out NIST standards, which is, you know, a bill that Senator Young and I passed out of this Committee. That you focus on the national Artificial Intelligence research resource that [Senators] Heinrich and Rounds...we passed that out of Committee. And the AI Education that Senator Moran and I worked on. So those are all good things. We passed them out of this Committee. Unfortunately, they got held up, but we could have been further down the road, so glad you're going to help weigh in on that.

Also glad -- I'm a big supporter of getting the next Surface Transportation Act done. So it's good to see that part of the Surface Transportation Act is this provision that the White House would be advocating for -- in use of those resources as it relates to data centers --, because I think that's a very interesting concept, given the demand that we have. And what can we do when you think about infrastructure? And you think about all our infrastructure, I would say that our grid-related infrastructure to U.S. AI leadership is a critical investment, and so again, very blessed that the Northwest has had cheap hydro for a long period of time, and that's why you see this really like an entire ecosystem continuing to unfold with the demand for AI. But also energy solutions like fusion. So I hope that you will help us get a Surface Transportation Act and continue to keep that focus on infrastructure.

Back to the larger issue I brought up in my opening comments about the Middle East situation related to, you know, yesterday's events. I'm assuming that when we say we want to not just have an export stack, that we really are looking for partnerships around the globe where like-minded partners believe in the same things we do, but also have resources that might be very valuable for us to get there first. And I would assume that you think the Middle East -- we have a lot of partnerships already between the Northwest and the Middle East on AI --, I would assume that you think that's a very important region for us to get right as it relates to this issue?

Dir. Kratsios: Yeah, so I traveled with the President in our Middle East trip a few months ago, where we struck deals both in KSA and in UAE, on helping bring American chips to that region. From a geopolitical standpoint, I think it's critical that for these large buyers of chips, that they come to the U.S., and we want to be the partner of choice for that. So we're very excited to do that. And those deals, I think, were the first big ones we've done. And I think show an example of kind of how seriously we take the export of American technology.

Sen. Cantwell: Do you think that we could do a technology NATO kind of alliance with these countries on AI standards or AI innovation?

Dir. Kratsios: I think there's a big opportunity to continue to work with our partners [and] allies across the totality of the stack. And I think the AI export program provides a terrific opportunity to build a -- essentially trusted network of other technology companies that are non-U.S. from partners and allies. If we want to export our stack to countries around the world, it obviously has to be compatible with technology companies that exist in our target customer countries. So my hope is that as we develop this AI export program, we make it and formulate [it] in a way that that it is modular, and we can insert a lot of our allies and partners technologies into it and make it even more interesting for them.

Sen. Cantwell: Okay, I have a couple of quick questions. So on your point about a centers of excellence, that's where you see the sandbox application? When it's very specific to an application, is that what you're saying?

Dir. Kratsios: I don't know what form it will take, but I think creating sandboxes where individual use cases which are prohibited or are limited by a law or regulation that was written before the advent of AI, I think there's a great opportunity to try to find ways to do tests.

Sen. Cantwell: So you're talking about a solution, as opposed to a broad policy where somehow you're the AI czar and you're waving a wand every day saying no and yes?

Dir. Kratsios: No, no, that sits with the agencies.

Sen. Cantwell: Thank you. I just wanted to clarify that point. And then, something I heard this morning that I was a little astounded by, the Secretary of Commerce said he thought that we should start collecting 50 percent of investment revenue from startups done by university research. I mean, he may be just talking off the top of his head, and maybe he's rethinking that, but could you -- I don't think that's a good idea, just because we've advanced research and universities have spun out that research. I'm not sure we should be collecting 50 percent from our entrepreneurs back to the federal government.

Dir. Kratsios: I'm not familiar with those comments. I'll have to look those up and get and get back to you. But broadly speaking, our office has been a fierce advocate for basic R&D across all of our university systems.

Sen. Cantwell: Right. Without, the federal government trying to take 50 percent of it? Yes. So anyway...I appreciate it. Look forward to working with you on getting this policy right. As I said, we have a lot of bills that we already passed out once -- [and] got held up. Hopefully, there's so much in common here on those in a bipartisan basis and then getting the rest of this right. So thank you so much.

Dir. Kratsios: Thank you, Senator.