

Response to Written Questions Submitted by Hon. John Thune to Wilbur Ross, Jr.

Question 1. The United States faces growing cybersecurity threats. As recent news reports show, malicious hackers harm our economy and national security through unauthorized access to private sector intellectual property, sensitive data, and critical infrastructure. Cyberespionage costs companies billions of dollars every year. While Congress and the Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) collaborated on the successful Cybersecurity Framework for Critical Infrastructure, the battle is far from over. Under your leadership, what will be the Department's approach to working with industry in order to combat ongoing cyber threats?

Answer: Cybersecurity is a huge and immediate problem. Strengthening our cybersecurity is critical to U.S. trade and national security. If confirmed, I will work proactively through NIST and with our interagency and industry partners to address the cybersecurity and privacy challenges that our nation currently faces and will regularly review the Department's efforts to ensure that markets remain open to U.S. innovators.

Question 2. The Committee has struggled for some time with receiving timely responses to letters, questions following hearings, and other requests for information from NOAA. There have also been instances when the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has had a hard time getting responses from NOAA, which has slowed down CBO's ability to issue scores on bills the Committee is trying to advance. Such delays make effective Congressional oversight and passing legislation difficult, and are unacceptable. Do you commit to ensuring NOAA provides me and my staff with timely and complete responses to inquiries?

Answer: If confirmed, I will do my best to ensure that all components of Commerce including NOAA will be responsive.

Response to Written Questions Submitted by Hon. Roger Wicker to Wilbur Ross, Jr.

Question 1. The Department of Commerce has a critical role to play in protecting U.S. industries from the unfair practices of our trading partners. This has been particularly true over the last 30 years with respect to our domestic softwood lumber industry, which the outgoing administration recognized as a “vital” part of the U.S. economy just last June.

Forest products are certainly a vital part of Mississippi’s economy, generating more than \$1.1 billion in 2015. I support trade practices that will allow the softwood lumber industry to continue to thrive in my state and across the country. Over 350,000 Americans work in the softwood lumber industry, and approximately 11 million private U.S. landholders depend on the strength of that industry in managing their own family-owned timberlands.

With the 2015 expiration of the softwood lumber agreement, the Department of Commerce is once again at the forefront of protecting U.S. jobs through its enforcement of the United States’ trade remedy laws.

Are you committed to the strong enforcement of our nation’s antidumping and countervailing duty laws, and will the use and enhancement of trade remedies be a priority for the Department?

Answer. I will work with all the stakeholders, including those at Commerce and the other federal agencies, industry and the Congress, to ensure U.S. companies can compete in international markets while protecting our national security and foreign policy interests. I favor quotas to offset stumpage subsidies.

Question 2. Recently, the President-Elect announced a Manufacturing Council to be coordinated by the Commerce Department and the President’s Strategic Policy Forum. Each of these initiatives provide business leaders a forum to offer their expertise and advice to the Administration on how to grow the economy and create jobs. As you may know, multinational companies employ 20 percent of our nation’s manufacturing force and pay salaries 30 percent greater than the economy-wide average.

Will you commit to ensuring that these companies have a seat at the table for both the Manufacturing Council and the President’s Strategic Forum?

Answer. If confirmed, I will do my best.

Response to Written Question Submitted by Hon. Deb Fischer to Wilbur Ross, Jr.

Question. Mr. Ross, if confirmed, will you commit to taking all steps needed to ensure that FirstNet will stay within its existing \$7 billion authorization as the network is deployed, and that it will not come back to seek more money from Congress? It is important to me, and I expect that several of my colleagues on the committee share this view, that the network be built in a cost-effective and efficient way.

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to being fully briefed on FirstNet and its deployment strategy. Based on press reports, I am concerned that existing delays point toward cost overruns and, if that appears to be the case, will make corrective measures a priority.

Response to Written Questions Submitted by Hon. Dan Sullivan to Wilbur Ross, Jr.

Question 1. Commercial and recreational fishing provide significant contributions to our nation's economy. Alaska's fisheries are by far the largest in the nation, accounting for over 50% of total domestic landings and more than 60,000 jobs—making the fisheries industry our largest private employer. Alaska is the superpower of seafood. In many communities, our fisheries are the backbone of their economy. The Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) is a big part of the reason that the United States has the world's best managed fisheries, particularly in Alaska, where we have no overfished stocks. A hallmark of the MSA is the Council process, which are stakeholder driven decision-making bodies that allow those most qualified and invested in the sustainability and health of the resource, the fishermen themselves, to make decisions regarding the management of their fisheries.

Do you share our commitment to sustainable management of U.S. fisheries? Will you support maintaining the existing consensus-based regional council system for fisheries management?

Answer. I share the Committee's commitment to sustainable fisheries as embodied in the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Good science on fish stocks and oceanic conditions is essential to meet the MSA's sustainable fishery goals. I also support the Council system, though I recognize that fishery management under the Council system faces different challenges in each region and look forward to working with each region to address those challenges.

Question 2. In the middle of 2014, Russia put an embargo on seafood imports from the U.S. If we look at what the U.S. exported to Russia before this ban took effect, we can extrapolate and estimate that we've lost well more than \$200 million in export value in those two and a half years – most of which would have come from Alaska. In that same period, the U.S. has imported roughly \$1 billion in seafood from Russia. We know that the Trump Administration places a high value on having fair trade relationships our trading partners.

How will you use your post as Secretary of Commerce to restore fairness to our seafood trade with Russia and other trade partners?

Answer. Russia undoubtedly and unfairly used seafood as a response to our sanctions. We need to find a way to deal with it.

Question 3. There is a significant backlog of hydrographic charting nationwide, which can adversely affect maritime commerce and increase the risk of marine casualties. This is a huge problem in Alaska where some areas off our coast have chart data collected back in the 1800's when Russia still owned the territory. There is potential to address this backlog through partnerships with the private sector, but there is a need for leadership to make this happen.

Will you work with me to aggressively reduce this charting backlog and increase the use of public private partnerships to achieve this goal?

Answer. Yes. The charting back-log poses a significant challenge. If confirmed I look forward to being briefed on this issue and working with the Department and Congress to address it.

Question 4. For Alaska, NOAA's missions—managing our nation's fisheries, charting our waters, and providing accurate weather forecasting— are of significant importance. Yet, much of the NOAA staffing and infrastructure for Alaska is located elsewhere.

Will you work with me to ensure NOAA personnel and assets are deployed in a manner that makes sense for both completing the mission and the taxpayers?

Answer. Yes. I support cost-effective measures to improve the NOAA's ability to carry out its mission, and, if confirmed, look forward to working with Congress to implement those measures.

Question 5. The increasingly ice free Arctic is one of the most dynamic regions of growth and investment on Earth. Russia continues to make investments to develop the Northern Sea Route to not only export natural resources from Russia's Arctic, but also to increase international transshipment with Asian countries. The United States has virtually no strategic infrastructure along its Arctic coastline. The United States remains critically unprepared to manage an Arctic open for business.

If confirmed, would you be willing to work with my office on advancing ways to address infrastructure investment in the Arctic?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on the efforts to date to improve America's position in the Arctic and working with Congress and the State of Alaska to enhance those efforts.

Question 6. In 2018, the International Whaling Commission will consider quota renewal for our subsistence whaling communities in Alaska. The Department of Commerce plays a critical role in preserving the ability for our Alaska Native communities to continue whaling as they have for millennia.

If confirmed will you work to ensure that our communities can continue to hunt the bowhead whale?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the Department's work to support Alaska Native subsistence whaling.

Response to Written Question Submitted by Hon. Cory Gardner to Wilbur Ross, Jr.

Question 1. Mr. Ross, in January, the President signed into law my legislation, the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act, which I introduced with Senator Peters, Chairman Thune, and Ranking Member Nelson. This legislation promotes the great work the American scientific community has done to make America globally competitive and aims to refocus our research efforts to keep us competitive.

A portion of this bill highlights the national network of Manufacturing Extension Partnerships (MEPs), which provide small manufacturers with resources and guidance to improve manufacturing processes and bolster domestic manufacturers. My state's MEP, Manufacturer's Edge, has helped numerous Colorado manufacturers gain a competitive advantage and the success of the MEP program is a great example of valuable public-private partnerships.

Will you commit to supporting the MEP program to ensure that our nation's manufacturers have the tools that they need to compete on a global playing field?

Answer. I have heard only good things about the NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership. If confirmed, I look forward to being fully briefed on the program and will carefully consider it when allocating resources within the Department.

Response to Written Questions Submitted by Hon. Todd Young to Wilbur Ross, Jr.

Question 1. Intellectual property is crucial to the well-being of our economy. More money is spent on Research & Development in the U.S. than in any other country in the world. In fact, approximately 30% of the American workforce is employed either directly or indirectly in IP-intensive industries. In order to continue accelerating the pace of innovation in our economy, our trading partners must all play by the same rules with respect to market access and protecting intellectual property. How do you plan to utilize trade negotiations to ensure that any potential new trade agreements achieve true 21st century standards in pharmaceutical IP, including, patentability, patent term linkage, patent linkage, and data protection (at least 5-years for small and at least 12-years for large molecules)?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to being fully briefed on intellectual property issues. Intellectual property rights should be part of any new negotiations with our trading partners, and agreed upon provisions in both existing agreements and new agreements need enforcement vigorously and urgently.

Question 2. Mr. Ross, one issue we discussed in our meeting was the sheer size and scope of the Commerce Department and the challenges that alone presents to you in leading such a large organization. We also discussed the many opportunities to streamline department functions, reduce redundancies, and eliminate certain federal government functions that should be left to the States or private sector. Can I get a commitment from you that you will report to me within 180 days of your confirmation on efficiencies you will recommend to streamline the work of the Commerce Department?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to conduct a thorough review of the Department's programs and will urgently develop and report an efficiency program.