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U.S. Senate Date: Thursday, September 6, 2018

Committee on Environment  
and Public Works Washington, D.C.

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HEARING ON THE NOMINATION OF HAROLD B. PARKER OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
TO BE FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSON OF THE NORTHERN BORDER REGIONAL  
COMMISSION

Thursday, September 6, 2018

United States Senate

Committee on Environment and Public Works

Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m. in room 406, Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Honorable Jim Inhofe [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Senators Inhofe, Cardin, Boozman, Wicker, Ernst, and Gillibrand.

Also Present: Senator Carper.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JIM INHOFE, A UNITED STATES SENATOR  
FROM THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA

Senator Inhofe. Our subcommittee will come to order. Let me see the order of things here.

Okay, we are here today to consider the nomination of Harold B. Parker, who I haven't seen for 15 years, to be the Cochair of the Northern Border Regional Commission.

Congress authorized the Commission in the 2008 Farm Bill to fund economic and community development in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York. The Commission works to direct fund Federal appropriations toward State prioritized economic and community development strategies and projects.

If confirmed, Mr. Parker will be one of five voting members of the Commission, to include the governors of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York.

Nominated by President Trump on July 27th, 2018, he currently serves as Special Assistant for Intergovernmental Affairs to New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu, focusing on issues of trade, security, and the economy. Previously, he has served as a long-time congressional staffer for then Congressman John Sununu, as well as Congressman Charles Bass.

Throughout his career, Mr. Parker has developed relationships across New Hampshire and Canada, and those

relationships will serve him well in his role.

Governor Sununu wrote of Mr. Parker, "Harold understands the need for economic rejuvenation in the northern tier of New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine," and "Mr. Parker has worked to spur economic development and has spearheaded New Hampshire's efforts to attract Canadian business to move over the border."

Senator Shaheen is here today to introduce the nominee and, as I said, we have received letters from both Democrats and Republicans attesting to Mr. Parker's qualifications and to his character.

Let's hear, first of all, from Senator Cardin for an opening statement, then we will recognize you, Senator Shaheen, for an introduction.

[The prepared statement of Senator Inhofe follows:]

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, A UNITED STATES  
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF MARYLAND

Senator Cardin. Senator Inhofe, first of all, thank you for calling this hearing.

I do want to make an observation. It is normally not this quiet on this hallway, but there is something else going on today in the Senate on confirmation hearings which has a little bit more attention than this nomination hearing.

But I want Mr. Parker to know that we very much appreciate your willingness to serve in this very important position. We know there is sacrifice involved in doing this, things that you will be doing by being called upon for public service, and we thank you for being willing to step forward to serve in this very important role.

Mr. Chairman, I am going to be spending Saturday in the western part of Maryland. I mention that because the Appalachian Regional Commission, which is a similar commission to the Northern Border Regional Commission, has been critically important for economic growth in that part of Maryland.

I will be talking about a STEM program that is going to be set up at Garrett College, which is the most further western part of our State. The broadband Last Mile Connections has been done through that Commission and has really given economic hope

to the people of western Maryland and the Appalachian region. It is a wonderful community, but they need to have economic futures for their families to be able to stay and live and work in that area, and the Appalachian Regional Commission has been a critical partner in making that a reality.

In the areas that are under the Northern Border Regional Commission, you have similar challenges. I applaud those that were in the Senate and House that initiated this effort. I know Senator Shaheen has been critically involved in that both as governor and as Senator.

We look forward to hearing your vision as to how this Commission can help that region and I will be asking you during the question period how we can learn from the different regional commissions that we have in this Country. We have established one in Alaska; there is one in the Mississippi Delta. It seems to me that we should be trying to learn from each other.

The second area that I would mention, Mr. Chairman, is that we have not had consistent support from this Administration in funding these programs. The Appalachian Regional Commission was zeroed out in the last budget by the President. We supported it and put the money back in. The President included the funds in this budget cycle, but in regards to the Northern Border Regional Commission it is my understanding the Administration has zeroed out the funding.

We are committed to making sure the funding exists, but it is a challenge, I guess, for the leader to figure out how do you deal with OMB that hasn't exactly given you the broadest support signal by the way they have presented their budget.

So these are interesting questions I hope we will have a chance to get into, but I think you are going to find, Mr. Parker, a very supportive Committee in regards to trying to give you the tools you need to carry out your very important assignment.

[The prepared statement of Senator Cardin follows:]

Senator Inhofe. Thank you, Senator Cardin.

Senator Shaheen, you are recognized for an introduction.



STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JEANNE SHAHEEN, A UNITED STATES  
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Senator Shaheen. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Cardin and Senator Ernst. It is nice to be here with you this morning. I am really pleased to have been asked by Harold to introduce him. He has been nominated, as you pointed out, to serve as the Federal Cochair of the Northern Border Regional Commission.

I also want to recognize, behind me, Mark Scarano, who is his predecessor, who is here to support Harold.

We have had a bipartisan approach in New Hampshire, and I think in Congress, to these commissions, to the Northern Border Regional Commission because it has, as you pointed out, Senator Cardin, really had a substantial impact on communities in northern New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, and Maine in helping to create jobs and to support projects that improve the quality of life for people in the northern parts of those four northern New England and New York States.

During my time in the Senate, I have seen the NBRC grow from an ambitious idea to a multimillion dollar collaboration of State and Federal partners that help to assist in job training activities and develop much needed public infrastructure in the granite State and in those communities throughout the northern

forest region.

As you pointed out, Senator Cardin, there has been an effort to zero out funding for the NBRC, as well as some other regional commissions, and on the Appropriations Committee we have restored that funding and actually increased it in the last budget cycle.

To continue the great work of the Commission, the next Federal cochair must have an extensive knowledge of the region, a clear understanding of the challenges it faces, and an insight into its potential for growth in the future, and, in this respect, I believe that Harold Parker is well suited for the role.

Throughout his tenure in State and Federal Government, Harold has worked in many capacities that required deep engagement with New Hampshire's North Country communities. In his current role as Special Assistant to the Governor for Intergovernmental Affairs, Harold focuses heavily on issues of trade, security, and the economy. Right now, he is spearheading an effort to craft an economic policy agreement between the State of New Hampshire and the province of Quebec that would promote opportunities for businesses in both countries to grow across our international border.

Now, as you pointed out, Senator Inhofe, prior to his work with the governor, Harold served as outreach director in the

Offices of Congressman Charlie Bass and Congressman and Senator John E. Sununu, who is not our current governor, who is Chris Sununu, a brother.

I got to know Harold in those days when he was working for Congressman Sununu and saw his good staff work, and I know that his position in both of those offices brought him in close contact with communities in the Northern Border Region.

I must also say that I have had the opportunity, as a Senator, to work very closely with Harold on a program that we call Law Enforcement Awards in New Hampshire. This is an idea that he actually came up with when he was working with Congressman Sununu, and it is to recognize law enforcement officers in the State who have gone above and beyond the call of duty in their role as police officers. It has been a bipartisan program that has been very effective in recognizing law enforcement in the State of New Hampshire, and he really deserves the credit for making that program go.

So, whether bringing the perspectives of local leaders to the Federal level or helping small towns navigate the government grant process, Harold has been a dependable advocate and resource for the people of New Hampshire.

He has deep roots in the region covered by the NBRC and he has cultivated bipartisan relationships across State and national borders that would be valuable in this position.

So, I hope that the members of this subcommittee will agree with me that his experience and expertise make him well suited to serve as Federal Cochair at the NBRC.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Senator Shaheen follows:]

Senator Inhofe. Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen. You are welcome to stay and even come up on the dais during the proceeds, or, if you have scheduling problems, you can be excused.

Senator Shaheen. Yes, I have an Appropriations Committee, so I won't go there, but thank you.

Senator Inhofe. All right. That's good.

We are anxious to get the opening statement.

Why don't you come up, if you would.

There are, however, some required questions that have to be asked. I will get those out of the way, then we will hear your opening statement and we will ask questions, all right?

Mr. Parker. Yes, sir.

Senator Inhofe. All right, you have to answer these audibly, if you would. I have to ask the following questions.

Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear before this Committee or designated members of this Committee, and other appropriate committees of Congress, and provide information subject to appropriate and necessary security protections with respect to your responsibilities?

Mr. Parker. Yes, sir.

Senator Inhofe. Do you agree to ensure that testimony, briefings, documents, and electronic and other forms of

information are provided to this Committee and its staff, and other appropriate committees, in a timely manner?

Mr. Parker. Yes, sir.

Senator Inhofe. Lastly, do you know of any matters which you may or may not have disclosed that might place you in any conflict of interest if you are confirmed?

Mr. Parker. None that I am aware of, sir.

Senator Inhofe. All right, Harold, you are recognized for an opening statement.

Mr. Parker. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Inhofe. If you want to abbreviate it, feel free to do that. Your entire statement will be made a part of the record.

Mr. Parker. I have managed to narrow it down.

Senator Inhofe. Use your mic there. I don't think you're turned on, are you?

STATEMENT OF HAROLD B. PARKER, NOMINEE TO BE FEDERAL  
COCHAIRPERSON OF THE NORTHERN BORDER REGIONAL COMMISSION

Mr. Parker. Chairman Inhofe, Senator Cardin, members of the Environment and Public Works Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss my qualifications for the position of Federal Cochair of the Northern Border Regional Commission, or the NBRC.

I would like to start by thanking the President for nominating me to this position and to Governor Chris Sununu for his recommendation. I would also like to extend my deepest thanks to Senator Jeanne Shaheen for introducing me here today. I would also like to thank Senator Maggie Hassan and Senator John Sununu, and all those who have submitted letters of support on my behalf.

The President's submission of my nomination and my appearance here today is one of the great honors of my career in public service, a career which includes being a staff member for Senator John Sununu in this chamber and eight years of service in the United States House of Representatives.

I grew up in the territory covered by the Northern Border Regional Commission. I saw firsthand what happened when the pulp and paper economy collapsed and how it devastated entire communities and generations of workers and businesses.

Over the decades since then, I have seen generations of dedicated elected officials work to help find economic solutions to these communities. We have been through multiple new strategies and plans. The result is what we are all painfully aware of: there are no easy solutions. The challenge we face in these regions is cultural, generational, demographic, and, most of all, it is complex.

Providing the leadership and resources to help find a path forward for these communities across the four State Northern Border Region is exactly what the Commission is tasked with. I want to contribute to an agency that has helped the people of the region by providing financial resources that have a quick and direct impact on the communities by helping increase economic diversity across northern New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, and working to enable communities in these States to chart a path forward of their own choosing.

I am prepared to focus my passion and my energy to use these resources of the Federal Government as a partner to State and local decision makers as they chart their path forward to build communities that represent places where the next generation will want to live and work.

My career brings a vantagepoint that comes from extensive experience in public service. When I was right out of university, I was a part-time police officer in the Town of



Durham, New Hampshire. During this time, my career in politics and public service began by starting to volunteer on congressional races.

I went on to become a staff member during a 1996 presidential campaign, which led to a position on Congressman John E. Sununu's first congressional staff later that year. My portfolio started to consolidate around the issues of law enforcement, homeland security, New Hampshire-Canadian trade, international relations in New England.

I eventually became Director of the Outreach Program that allowed me and other staff members to travel around the State and meet with public officials and business owners and citizens. It was the Outreach Program that allowed me to gain experience with grant research, coalition building on issues, and working for communities that needed help.

From 2011 to 2013, I worked for Congressman Charles F. Bass of New Hampshire as Projects Director, which was an in-depth experience in dealing with local citizens and businesses affected by or seeking help from the Federal Government.

While I was in federal service, I also served my hometown by being elected to the Planning Board and Budget Committee. It was on the Budget Committee where we handled the town's \$25 million a year line item budget that I began to see how, if structured correctly, the government could partner with private

enterprise to make investments that lead to economic growth.

In 2014, I was elected to the New Hampshire House of Representatives, or, as we call it in New Hampshire, the General Court, where I served on the Executive Departments and Administration Committee, Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, and the Fish and Game Committee. I was also appointed to the New Hampshire-Canada Trade Council by the New Hampshire Secretary of State and was a representative of the New Hampshire House to the Council of State Governments.

I resigned from the New Hampshire House in January 2017 to join the staff of Governor Chris Sununu. I started as Policy Advisor and was later promoted to become Special Assistant to the Governor for Intergovernmental Affairs. My portfolio has been similar to my federal service, with the added area of transportation infrastructure. I am the governor's representative to the Coalition of Northeastern Governors, where we work with Eastern Canadian Premiers on interstate and cross-border issues of transportation, trade, economic development, and the environment.

I believe in outreach to the governments of Eastern Canada, our neighbors and partners of the intertwined economies of the Northeast. In the 2008 law that set up the NBRC, crossing the international border to advocate for the Commission's region was recognized. While doing my research for this position, I

identified gaps in using Canadian contacts and opportunities to cross the border that are not being utilized. With Canadian companies looking for business opportunities across the border, I believe the NBRC should be a partner with its member States to explore the possibility for expansion of Canadian companies into the Northern Tier, and a regional entity like the NBRC can back up those States and make the regional case. It adds a new level of diversity to the NBRC portfolio and provides another avenue for increasing opportunity and economic diversity for the workers of the region.

I will continue the progress made by my predecessors. My goal is to expand economic diversity and leave the Commission stronger and ready to face future challenges.

I truly appreciate the opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to answering any questions you may have. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Parker follows:]

Senator Inhofe. Thank you, Mr. Parker. We will go ahead with some questions.

Confession is good for the soul, and I have to tell you that I don't really know about this Commission. I remember when this took place, but, of course, Oklahoma is quite a ways away from you guys up in the Northeast, so why don't you just go ahead and explain to me what the role of the Northern Border Regional Commission is.

Mr. Parker. The Northern Border Regional Commission is a Federal-State partnership that basically does economic infrastructure and communications grants or telecommunications grants to affected regions across the Northern Border; broadband Internet, infrastructure of that we can help grow business development parks and direct economic grants in towns for business incubators, just as an example.

It allows a concise and immediate impact by grant funding to towns in affected regions to help them out in the more economically troubled areas of the region.

Senator Inhofe. I see. I see. It was stated by both your introducer, as well as Senator Cardin, about zeroing out the budget for the Northern Border regions. Give us your response to that, what your feelings are, and how you can overcome that.

Senator Inhofe. I believe in the work of the NBRC. I believe it provides an essential service to the four States

affected. It helps the regions develop economic diversity, helps stop the outflow of migration of workers, and helps trying to make a better life for the people who live there.

If I am confirmed as Federal Cochair, I will continue to advocate to help those people out in those positions.

Senator Inhofe. Well, as you describe the works and the function of the Northern Border, in looking at your background, you seem to be certainly a right one to be doing this, and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Senator Cardin.

Mr. Parker. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Cardin. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Parker, thank you. I think the Chairman's question is one that was at least partially responsible for the President's team zeroing out your budget; that is, very few people know what you do. We had a similar problem with the Appalachian Regional Commission. The President zeroed out that budget last year. He did not this year. Many of us have put a spotlight on the work of the Appalachian Regional Commission.

As I said in my opening statement, I will be in the western part of Maryland Saturday. I will be at Garrett College, which is in Garrett County, which is one of our largest geographical counties and one of the smallest in population. It is in the mountains and it has had challenges to get any type of economic

growth.

Garrett College will have, now, a STEM program, a major STEM program, the two-year community college, and will have equipment that will be unique among higher education facilities in this Country thanks to the Appalachian Regional Commission's grant. That will attract and keep students in Garrett College from even outside of Garrett County coming in to use the STEM facilities that are there.

It is not the only grant that has been given by the Appalachian Regional Commission; they have given a grant to Allegheny College, which is also in the Appalachian Region, in Cumberland, to establish a STEM program. They have also given grants to Frostburg State University, which is also in that region.

I mention all of that because it has been a magnet for developing job opportunities for that area. I can mention also, as I did earlier, the broadband. We have broadband in Maryland, but the connections are very difficult to finance because it is not economically feasible for cable companies to connect that last mile. The Appalachian Regional Commission in Maryland has given grants so that our key facilities, our hospitals, our schools, our development centers, are all now connected by broadband as a result of the Appalachian Regional Commission.

I mention all that because I really do think one of your

challenges is to promote what you do.

Mr. Parker. Well, Senator, that starts today. Realizing I have a 14-year career with Congress. It has been a joy to serve this institution. Coming back down to talk to Appropriations, to talk to this Committee, to anybody who wants to hear about the Northern Borders Regional Commission is one of my jobs. I will probably be down here more than people want to see my face, sir, to make sure that this Commission is understood, what it does, what we can do and how we can help the people in the four States involved; and if that means pounding the pavement on Capitol Hill all the time, that is where we start.

The delegations in those four States know exactly what this organization does. I agree with you, it is time to expand outwards and make sure that the rest of Congress understands it also, sir.

Senator Cardin. I would suggest that you could get some help in doing that through the other three regional commissions that have been authorized for funding by the Congress. I mentioned Appalachian, but we also have the Delta Regional Commission and you also have Denali Commission in Alaska.

They have similar functions. They are all different, the regions are all different, but they all have the similar problem, and that is, until this hearing was called, I only knew about the Appalachian Regional Commission. And I am sure that

those that represent outside the Appalachian Region knew very little about the Appalachian Regional Commission.

I think that if you would reach out to our colleagues from Alaska, from the Delta Region, you could magnify the audience that may be interested in the work of our commissions.

Mr. Parker. As you see, I am a typical staffer, Senator; I am taking notes on what you are saying and I will act upon them.

Senator Cardin. Well, I appreciate that. The Chairman asked you some required questions at the beginning of the hearing that we ask all nominees, and that is to respond to what the Committee asks you to do. I think it would be advisable to keep the Committee informed as to what you are doing so that our staffs are fully aware, as the authorizing committees, to make sure that the appropriators understand what you do and that we can be more informed if asked by the appropriators or if they try to do some things that we do or do not like, and also perhaps even to seek additional partnerships if in fact that is deserved.

Working with us in that capacity will further your mission, but will also help us carry out our responsibilities.

Mr. Parker. Thank you, Senator. I would like to extend an invitation to any member of this Committee. I would be glad to give you a tour of the Northern Border Region, any State you would like.



Senator Cardin. I would like to do that today, considering the weather we have here in Washington.

[Laughter.]

Mr. Parker. Unfortunately, Senator, I don't think it is much different at home right now, from what I heard.

Senator Cardin. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Inhofe. Thank you.

We have been joined by Senator Boozman from Arkansas.

Senator Boozman.

Senator Boozman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for being here, Mr. Parker.

I think Senator Cardin makes a really very, very good point about the different authorities working together. As he pointed out, he was familiar with the Appalachian Region. I am very familiar with the Delta Regional Authority and have heard of Appalachian because that was an early one and was on the forefront a lot, but really was not aware of this until we got into actually looking through the Committee at it.

I think the idea of very different regions, but very, very similar problems: how do you jumpstart opportunity in these areas. So, I think that is an excellent suggestion.

You mentioned you have a long history of being a staffer, working hard, this and that, at the Federal level, local level. Tell me how that has prepared you to do a good job in this

particular role.

Mr. Parker. Well, Senator, this is what I was doing at 5:30 this morning, I was working down my work experience because it spans over three decades. It helps me on many reasons: economic security agreements is talking with Government; infrastructure projects.

I have been working with the Port of Portsmouth for new docks, new fiber optic cable. Local requests to municipalities, business incubators, business parks, industrial businesses, cities and town; budget. I have a \$25 million line item budget in my hometown of Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, which is about \$5 million more than what all the NBRC's budget is. I have been doing that for 14 years.

My background in planning, revolving loan funds on the Planning Board in Wolfeboro, and congressional background is the ability to come here, talk to you Senators, Congressmen, to sit there and make the case for this Commission. My background, I believe, has prepared me for that, along those lines; my experiences. I have written more grant letters; I have gone to more meetings; I have dealt with more Federal agencies in 16 years now that I don't think I can put on one piece of paper, sir.

Senator Boozman. Very good. I appreciate you highlighting that because I think that is very, very important also.

In your testimony, you discussed how your time served on your hometown's budget committee and planning board showed you how public-private partnerships, the P3s, could lead to economic growth. If confirmed, do you plan on looking at innovative ways for the Government to partner with private enterprise? Certainly, that is something that President Trump, all of us are trying, how do you get that done. And how do you think public-private partnerships could be helpful to the Regional Commission?

Mr. Parker. Public-private partnerships are the encouragement of private development and the Commission is enabled in law. In my hometown, public-private partnerships on the more municipal level is to help build new ski areas, new libraries. It is town-funded, business-funded, and civilian-funded.

I believe, in the Northern Border Regional Commission, the more we can bring private business either from outside of the region, on our side of the border or from Canada, I see a business coming in, they need to train their workforce. The NBRC has the ability to train, through funding, a workforce, work hand-in-hand with the business to set up the type of workers they would like to have trained.

A great example of this is transportation and infrastructure or transportation aircraft businesses.

Bombardier in Quebec is coming over the border a lot to set up American operations. They look at the Northern Tier because of its close aspect, obviously, to Quebec. Our ability is to talk to a company like that. Let's set up a partnership. You come down, we will help you train workers, we will increase the workload for the area or increase the worker retention in the area, along those lines. I can see the Commission doing that, sir.

Senator Boozman. Very good.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Parker. I hope to God I didn't lose part of your question in that answer, sir.

Senator Boozman. No, no, no. You know, those things are so important. With limited resources and things, that has to be the future. There has to be a lot more joining together so that we can get some of these things accomplished.

Senator Cardin mentioned broadband, things like that, all these things. Hopefully, that would be something that, again, the commissions talking could put forth some best practices and share amongst you all, and then hopefully come forward with how we can get this done in other ways, utilizing other authorities to just do the best job that we can.

Mr. Parker. Yes, sir.

Senator Boozman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Inhofe. Thank you, Senator Boozman.

I have 10 letters from leadership throughout the area that we are addressing that. In addition to that, letters from places in Quebec, outside of the United States. All of these are support letters for you. Without objection, I will make them a part of the record.

[The referenced information follows:]

Senator Inhofe. Senator Cardin.

Senator Cardin. No objection.

Could I just ask Mr. Parker how do you interact with Canada? Do they have a regional commission or is it strictly through the province governments or is it through the national government?

Mr. Parker. Actually, many different levels, Senator.

Senator Cardin. They don't have a regional commission, I assume?

Mr. Parker. No, but as part of the Northeastern Governors, we deal with the Eastern Canadian Premiers. We have our yearly conference. This year it was in Stowe, Vermont, where, as I said in my testimony, we talked about economic, transportation, infrastructure, along those lines.

The difference between us and Canada, as you well know, Senator, is that the bulk of their population and industry is probably within 100 miles of the U.S. border, so the economic setup is a little bit different going across that tier.

In my own experience, a lot of State-to-State work, New Hampshire-to-Quebec, New Hampshire-to-Ontario, New Hampshire-to-New Brunswick, and through these missions on behalf of my governor there is a lot of trade out there. There is a lot of business coming back and forth across the border. Three of the

four States in the Regional Commission are top exporters to Canada. For some reason, New Hampshire is not. I don't know why. But four States are top importers from Canada.

What we have found is that when I went over the border with the governor to Montreal last year, in our first trade mission, they have the big concept of trade. They don't know what the individual States can do for them, which brings me back around to the Northern Borders Regional Commission. In partnership with the States in this Commission, I think we can make a clearer case of what these -- each State is different and unique, and we also have the same problems, but we can sit there and bring forward added opportunities, an added voice, if you want to expand to the United States, come talk to us; there are ways we can help you.

And the beauty of it is, when I am working for my State, I am always running across Vermont or I am always running across New York or I am always running across Maine and Quebec or Ontario, so we are all actively pursuing. But I think each State has a regional asset that we can advertise to Canada, and I think the NBRC can help advocate for the individual member States.

Senator Cardin. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Inhofe. Thank you. Are there other questions?

If there are no other questions, we have members who may submit follow-up written questions for the record by noon.

[Discussion off the record.]

Senator Inhofe. I was told that Senator Carper -- normally, when they say they are on their way, that means the 14th Street Bridge. We will wait for a few minutes, but it can't be too long because we have another Committee hearing.

Senator Cardin. I will ask another question, then.

Senator Inhofe. Let me go ahead and get this requirement out of the way here.

We are actually going to keep the record open until noon, Monday, September 10th, and then you, as the nominee, should respond to those questions by 5:00 on Thursday, the 13th. As long as you will agree to do that, everything will be fine.

You are recognized, Senator Cardin.

Senator Cardin. I should point out that Senator Carper of Delaware is having their primary elections today, so it is understandable. Senator Carper does commute from Delaware, following the tradition of Senator Biden.

What I wanted to point out by the question in regards to what Canada does is that whether there are ways that we can facilitate your authority to help in dealing with the region with Canada. There may be ways in which we, through our mechanisms, can help you with giving you more authority to deal



with some of the intercountry issues.

Obviously, there are a lot of major issues between Canada and the United States today, we recognize that, in which our agencies will maintain their authority, but we may be able to help you deal with your regional economic issues by giving you greater parity with your counterparts in Canada. That was the reason I asked the question.

I would appreciate it if you could just, during your time, get back to us if there are things we can do to help you.

Mr. Parker. I would be glad to do that, Senator.

Senator Cardin. Thank you.

Senator Inhofe. And we have been joined by Senator Gillibrand.

Senator Gillibrand. Mr. Parker, thank you for being here. The Northern Border Regional Commission has invested more than \$57.6 million in Federal funds in some of the most distressed areas in New York State's Northern Border Region. This funding has supported critical initiatives to improve access to essential services like high-speed Internet and safe drinking water, as well as to support the launch of new businesses and growth of existing businesses.

The Commission has done similar work across other Northern Border States, helping economically distressed communities create good paying jobs based on local needs and strategies.

Congress has recognized the need for increasing funding for the Commission's effort, with the agency now funded at \$15 million annually, up from \$10 million in fiscal year 2017.

Despite all of this, President Trump's past two budgets have called for the elimination of the Commission.

Do we have your commitment today to advocate for continued and robust funding for this vital agency?

Mr. Parker. Senator, I will do my job as Federal Cochair to help the people involved in the region to make the case for why this Northern Borders is important to the region. The final authority on what happens to the Northern Borders Regional Commission is done by the authority and funding of the United States Congress. In my time there, I will do everything I can to make it a successful organization.

Senator Gillibrand. Well, I would urge you to come to the North Country and see how these funds are actually being used so effectively, so when you do have a chance to advocate within the Administration you can give real examples of what you have seen with your own eyes. So I welcome you. And the North Country is beautiful in the fall; you have all the foliage, so you must come.

Mr. Parker. Senator, I actually want to go to New York first, if I am blessed to be confirmed. I know New Hampshire, Maine well, Vermont well; New York I need to go to and see.

Senator Gillibrand. We would welcome you and we can coordinate your visit.

Related, what are your views on the Federal Government's role in supporting economic development efforts in distressed regions?

Mr. Parker. I wouldn't be here today, Senator, if I didn't believe in the Federal Government that we can help individuals through direct impact grants to communities and regions involved.

Senator Gillibrand. Do you think the Federal Government could do more than what it is already doing today?

Mr. Parker. Once again, Senator, that is up to the will and the authority and the funding of the United States Congress.

Senator Gillibrand. But if asked your opinion, what would your opinion be?

Mr. Parker. Just that right there, ma'am.

Senator Gillibrand. Do you think you could invest more, though?

Mr. Parker. Depends on the size of the territory. I mean, if the Northern Borders increases, you have to be conscious of the budgetary side, too.

Senator Gillibrand. I can give you an example. I think getting access to the Internet should be a basic human right. I think it is hard for businesses to succeed if they can't sell

their products or services throughout a community, throughout the world. So, one of the challenges we have in the North Country is access to rural broadband, because it is not economic for a Verizon or another provider to actually provide services. So, the reason why we use a lot of the funds towards economic development for rural broadband is because we want the economy to grow. You can't put in a new hotel, you can't put in a new hospital, you can't put in a new business if you don't have access to the Internet. That is the truth of the matter.

So, I would like you to see these communities, see what is working already, get an idea about where they would like to grow, and see why more funding for rural broadband is win-win-win for the Federal Government, because more people will pay more taxes, but good for the United States, we are more competitive, we sell more aggressively worldwide and we have a stronger economy.

So, I think, if you take the time to come, you will see how some of this funding actually is used locally very effectively and you will see that there is no economic case to be made for a private provider to actually provide it. There might only be 1,000 families living in an area, but there might be five major businesses that could continue to grow if they had access. So that is the whole nub.

So, I would like you to come, see it for yourself so, when

you are in the room to negotiate, to advocate, to say, you know, this is not wasted money and I know of places where you could certainly use more. That is useful and important for the long-term health and well-being of the Country and the economy. So, I would like you to realize that your position can be one of advocacy, not just do what you are told.

Mr. Parker. Senator, I have the honor of meeting with members of your staff, I believe, at 3:00 this afternoon, and I will set up a visit time with them over the next couple weeks.

Senator Gillibrand. Great. Wonderful.

Next issue. One of the Northern Border Regional Commission's greatest strengths is its flexible portfolio of programs and ability to work with other Federal, State, and local agencies to respond quickly to disruptions across industries or the threat of mass layoffs from a plant closure and to make the kind of investments necessary to revive distressed communities.

What actions will you take or will you ask Congress to help you with to increase the coordination and impact of investment by the Commission and other related Federal economic development agencies in our most economically struggling communities?

Mr. Parker. Senator, it is a great question. Can I get back to you with an answer on that? I would like to look into it a little bit more in depth.

Senator Gillibrand. That would be fantastic.

And probably related is what would you propose the Commission do to increase its ability to respond rapidly to economic disruptions in dislocations.

The reason why I ask this specifically is, because of some of these global trade wars, we have seen the price of steel collapse; we have seen some of our manufacturing plants have to shutter its doors. We are seeing it rapidly throughout the North Country. I have seen it with our historic production of steel and paper.

So, it is important to know that as the Administration goes up and down on trade, it has real world consequences, and one of them, sadly, is a lot of businesses are struggling. So, being flexible and being able to rapidly respond I think is a really important role for you personally, but also for the agency that you hope to run, because I think that would be the real gift to a community like mine for when there is going to be a big business that is going to shutter its doors, go overseas, lay off employees, the flexibility of what is the best economic development plan and getting resources to support it.

Last point that you can also submit for the record is what role do you see entrepreneurship playing in the revival of distressed communities and how can the Commission support that work. So, entrepreneurialism, innovation, respond rapidly to

the disruptions, and the ways that your Commission can facilitate coordination.

Mr. Parker. Got it.

Senator Gillibrand. Thank you so much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Inhofe. Yes, thank you, Senator Gillibrand.

Are there other questions, others who want to be heard?

[Discussion off the record.]

Senator Inhofe. Mr. Parker, if you want to relive our experience of 15 years ago, this will be a good time to do it.

Mr. Parker. It was a dusty fairground outside of Oklahoma City. I was out there working for Candidate Coburn at the time. Gave a great speech. Don't ask me, after 14 or 15 years, I can't remember, but --

Senator Inhofe. You are saying I made a great speech 15 years ago?

Mr. Parker. You made a great speech.

Senator Inhofe. That was the last great speech I made, as a matter of fact.

Mr. Parker. That is not my judgment to make that call, Senator. I just remember I was so surprised by Oklahoma, going out on deployment. The Wichita Mountains; Altus, as it was drilled into my head for the proper pronunciation, down in the southwest corner; just going around the State. People were

friendly and welcoming. Never forgot it.

Senator Inhofe. It is interesting. Altus is what you were trying to think of. I will be there tonight.

Mr. Parker. Oh, really?

Senator Inhofe. Yes. We have an annual event in Altus, and it happens to take place at this time.

Mr. Parker. We had someone from Senator Nichols' staff who really drilled the proper pronunciation of that town into our head. Because everybody from the Northeast was doing it wrong.

Senator Inhofe. That is right. They normally do. And that doesn't go unnoticed.

Mr. Parker. I found out after the bus ride.

Senator Cardin. Let me join in on this conversation.

I heard you mention that one of your responsibilities has been dealing with some of the ski resorts that are in this region. I mention that because in Western Maryland we have the Wisp Resort, which is located in the Appalachian Regional Commission, and it is, I would say, an underutilized economic tool for the region. It is important, but it could be even stronger.

There has been some change of ownership and they are trying to redevelop and they are doing some good things there, but one thing about mountain areas, mountain areas are challenged to get there because of the terrain, but does have one of the



advantages in regards to its weather. It allows you to do things that people are attracted to, such as skiing.

So, it is one area where I think, again, there could be a relationship between the Commission that you have been nominated to and the Appalachian Regional Commission that has these facilities. In West Virginia there are also significant ski resorts that are doing well.

Mr. Parker. Well, the ski areas I worked for, I was in the private sector at the time, but our biggest challenge actually was electricity costs. When I worked at Waterville Valley for the then CEO, now governor of New Hampshire, the electric bills were probably over \$1 million a month just in snow making and other areas, so it is a challenge.

They are also a great attraction all across the Northern Tier. A lot of our competition actually comes from southern Canada, especially in Quebec, the mountains right across the border, but overall it has been a thriving industry again, the last decade and a half to two decades. It takes its ups and downs.

Senator Cardin. One of our advantages in western Maryland is that we have Deep Creek Lake, which gives us water, so we have plenty of water. Also we have Deep Creek Lake, which makes it a four season for recreation; not just skiing, but the boating in the summer and, of course, the foliage in the fall

that we have already talked about, is incredible. So, we have all four seasons that we can take advantage of for recreation.

We also have the C&O Canal National Park, which is one of the most popular national parks. So, there are different areas that we can attract to try to make it four seasons on visitors.

The same thing is true up in upper State New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. There are similarities that you can build on.

Mr. Parker. And I look forward to talking to, obviously, I am going to reach out to the other commissions just to see what worked, what didn't work, what has been done well, what mistakes to avoid, and the institutionology.

The other thing about the Northern Border Regional Commission, I am working with economic experts from four States, along with my staff, or potentially my staff, and there is a lot of input. I actually sat in on the last NBRC meeting in Hanover, New Hampshire two weeks ago, and it was very congenial, very easy; a lot of issues were talked about. There was a lot of wisdom in that room. Not everybody agreed on everything, but it was well thought out, well argued, and, finally, consensus was reached to move forward.

There is a lot of fallback in this position, if I get confirmed, to grow into and get more wisdom coming from the people who are there already.

Senator Cardin. Mr. Chairman, I will relay a story that I was told about one of our Senators who asked that the vote be held open so that he could make that vote. It was the late Senator Ted Kennedy who said he is at the airport; would they hold the vote until he got here, and they said certainly they would do that. He was at the Boston Airport.

[Laughter.]

Senator Cardin. So, I am sure Senator Carper is close by.

One of the great things, both Senator Inhofe and I started in the House of Representative. We were just relating to Senator Kyle, who was sworn in yesterday, the three of us started the same year. 1987 was our first year in the House of Representatives, so we all have gotten our beginning in the House.

We know in the House that if a Congressman was 10 seconds late, they would probably be shut out. There was not a lot of leeway and courtesy in the House, and one of the things I think I like about the Senate is the fact that there is great respect for all members of the United States Senate. We recognize that we have demands on our time that can make it difficult for us to be where we want to be, and the courtesies are almost always extended in the Senate, and that is one of the things I appreciate.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your patience for Senator

Carper.

Mr. Parker. I have a very comfortable chair, so I am quite relaxed right now.

Senator Inhofe. Well, here he is, Senator Carper. All right, Tom, the first question comes from me. How is your day going?

Senator Carper. So far so good, but it is early.

Senator Inhofe. We have had a good hearing and had fairly good participation considering what is going on elsewhere in here, but we have had a chance to know Harold Parker well. We will just recognize you to ask any questions you like and make any comments.

Senator Carper. My thanks to you and our Ranking Member, Mr. Chairman, and to Mr. Parker.

Tell me just a little bit about your background, if you would, the elevator introduction. I know a little bit, but just go ahead in your words.

Mr. Parker. Well, I was born in Massachusetts, pretty much grew up in New Hampshire, lived my life in Wolfeboro, small town on Lake Winnepesaukee. One of my neighbors a couple miles away is Mitt Romney.

I have been in government service in one form or another --

Senator Carper. I understand Mitt Romney is running to join us. Is that true?

Mr. Parker. I didn't hear you.

Senator Carper. I think he has an interest in maybe coming and serving here in Washington.

Mr. Parker. I heard the rumor, sir.

Senator Carper. Yes. I heard he might be successful.

Mr. Parker. Yes, could be.

So long career in public service in various different forms, in the U.S. House, in the U.S. Senate as a staffer. I was elected to the New Hampshire House of Representatives twice from my hometown.

Senator Carper. How many members of your State legislature are there?

Mr. Parker. It is a very easily manageable 400 members, sir. When I get elected, I literally just represent a town. Actually, half of my town.

Senator Carper. And how many Senators do you have in your State?

Mr. Parker. Twenty-four.

Senator Carper. Twenty-four. I can't imagine what it is like. So, you served two terms there?

Mr. Parker. I served a term and about two months into the second term, where I resigned to join Governor Sununu's staff as a policy advisor.

Senator Carper. And when was that?

Mr. Parker. January of 2017, sir.

Senator Carper. Okay. And tell us about your work as a policy advisor.

Mr. Parker. Well, I got promoted to the governor. I am the Special Assistant to the Governor for Intergovernmental Affairs, but I still kept my policy portfolio. I did New Hampshire Department of Transportation, New Hampshire Department of Safety, New Hampshire Fish and Game Commission, New Hampshire-Canadian Trade Council, Fire and Emergency Services in New Hampshire. Basically, those are the issue areas I worked on for the governor.

There were four of us on the policy team. We roughly had a responsibility of a quarter of a State government each.

Senator Carper. Okay. One of the things that I focus on as governor myself and as a Congressman, certainly as a Senator, I focus on how do we create a more nurturing environment for job creation and job preservation. Folks in our businesses, mayors, governors, presidents, we don't create jobs; we help creating a nurturing environment for job creation and job preservation.

Would you just talk with us a little about your experience and how it helps prepare you to better ensure that that happens through this Commission?

Mr. Parker. The one thing I really, really have admired about the NBRC over the years is two things: its direct

economic grant impacts on the communities and towns involved and, two, as I stated, but I know you weren't here, sir, as I stated, I watched the pulp and paper industry collapse in the Northern Tier of the Northeast. There was too much concentration on one industry, throwing tourism aside for a second.

What I like about the NBRC is its diversity; it is to find new ways to diversify the economy out where we are not set forward in one area under one condition. And with the State cochairs of this Commission, the local connection is not lost, because a lot of these solutions are coming up from the town, whether it be an incubator or a project or increase in a business park. To sit there and help them do that I believe is the way to increase diversity or give that nurturing for the business that you are addressing, sir.

Senator Carper. Would you talk with us a little bit about the communication that takes place between the various commissions, including this one, and how do the commissions coordinate and collaborate with one another, if at all?

Mr. Parker. Are you talking about the other regional commissions?

Senator Carper. Yes.

Mr. Parker. The NBRC actually, if I remember correctly, they have twice-a-year meetings with other members where they

share ideas and practices and experiences among each other. I have not experienced any of that.

Right now I have been more focused on the NBRC directly when it involves the States. It is something that, as we discussed earlier and Senator Cardin mentioned, too, as a new chair, if I am confirmed, is to go out, reach out to them, and learn best practices and the history of what is successful and what hasn't been successful with them.

Senator Carper. Good.

Mr. Parker. There is a good level of communication, from what I have been told by the previous Federal cochair, who is sitting behind me.

Senator Carper. Who is that person?

Mr. Parker. Mark Scarano is the previous Federal cochair of the Northern Border Regional Commission.

Senator Carper. I just want to say this is the smallest audience I have ever observed as a confirmation hearing, which is actually a good thing.

Senator Cardin. We could move this up to the confirmation hearing on Kavanaugh.

Senator Carper. That is a little more contentious.

Mr. Parker. I am actually enjoying this.

Senator Carper. Well, good. Well, we won't hold you too much longer.



One of the things we had in the National Governors Association was the Center for Best Practices, a clearinghouse for good ideas, and it was an opportunity for us to learn from other States what was working, what wasn't. That is called the Center for Best Practices within the NGA. We were always stealing good ideas from other governors, other States, and letting them steal our good ideas, too, and our bad ideas, as well.

You touched on this just now, but how would you go about reaching out to the other commissions and say what are you doing about this or what are you doing about that? How would you do that? Or maybe there is already a way to do so?

Mr. Parker. Outside of the twice annual meetings, a phone call, sir. If confirmed, I would call my counterparts in the other commissions, talk to them, tell them what the situation is and what is going on in the NBRC. I would actually, hopefully, use them as a resource to say have you faced this problem, have you faced that problem? What have you done that has been successful?

I built my whole career in public service on talking and collaborating with other folks with different points of view or different experiences, and it won't stop at this position. It is a matter as simple as me reaching out and picking up the phone and calling them.

Senator Carper. Good, good, good.

Do I have time for one more?

Senator Inhofe. Sure.

Senator Carper. Thank you very much.

The Northern Border Regional Commission reauthorization bill is currently part of the Farm Bill that has passed the Senate, as you know. I would just ask have you had a chance to look over that legislation, the Farm Bill legislation, the reauthorization for the Northern Border Regional Commission? Do you support that legislation? Are there some improvements that you would have us take?

Mr. Parker. I haven't had a chance to look at the current legislation, Senator. I would like to take a look at it. If you have a specific question on it, I would love to get back to you on it.

Senator Carper. All right, good. Thanks. Well, good luck. We appreciate all of your service and your willingness to take this on as well. Thank you.

And thanks to my colleagues for making sure I had a chance to ask some questions.

Senator Inhofe. Well, we understand you have a busy day.

Senator Carper. It is.

Senator Inhofe. Thank you, Senator Carper.

Are there further questions? If not, we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:00 a.m. the subcommittee was adjourned.]