

Mr. President. I intend to vote today in favor of the confirmation of James G. Watt as Secretary of the Interior.

It is clear to me, Mr. President, that there is a considerable gulf between my views and those of the nominee. He has said little in the hearings before the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, in response to written questions which I submitted following those hearings, or in my two private meetings with him to allay my fears that he intends to tip the "balance" toward development interests. I am distressed by the lack of detail in most of his answers regarding his inclinations in carrying out the trust inherent in the role of Secretary of the Interior. In many cases, he has stated little more than that he will "obey the law." That pledge, to me, is merely the minimum requirement. With respect to the Alaska Lands bill, for example, which contains enormous discretionary responsibilities for the Secretary, Mr. Watt states that he has never read the legislation and has formed no views.

In light of these factors, I want particularly to make clear my reasons for supporting confirmation.

Firstly, I take very seriously the Constitutional responsibility which we carry out here. I believe that absent a compelling reason which transcends political philosophy, even a difference as formidable as that which confronts me with this nomination, the President should be given those cabinet appointees that he believes will best enable him to serve the nation.

Secondly, I am convinced that Mr. Watt is a man of sincerity and integrity. The Secretary-designate is a man of considerable talents and one who I am convinced will faithfully carry out the aims of the Reagan Administration.

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And thirdly, he has made a number of general commitments, I believe honestly, regarding his intentions to consult with Congress and the environmental community. I believe that he has the capacity to rise to the challenge of the enormous responsibilities which he is about to assume. I am hopeful, as well, that the weight of those responsibilities will prove to have a moderating effect on his views. I am hopeful that James G. Watt will take his place among the great Republican Secretaries of Interior of the past.

Mr. President, it is never comfortable to vote to confirm a man with whom you disagree broadly and fundamentally on critical issues. I, for one, expect that Mr. Watt will meet the commitments which he has made. I intend to hold him to them. He faces the beginning of a critical and historical decade in which the decisions which he makes and the actions which he takes will have a profound effect on generations to come. I look forward to working with him and wish him the best.