

On February 12, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation held a hearing (see [here](#) for the webcast) on the nominations of Jane Lubchenco as NOAA Administrator and John Holdren as head of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Although Sen. David Vitter (R-La.) questioned Holdren sharply over some papers Holdren wrote in the 1970s predicting “eco-catastrophe,” no significant controversy or opposition to the nominees emerged at the hearing. At its close, Committee Chair John D. Rockefeller IV (D-W.Va.) promised to move the nominations to the Senate floor quickly, perhaps within a week. Yet nearly three weeks later, nothing has happened. Now Juliet Eilperin [reports in the Washington Post](#) that Senator Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) has placed a “hold” on the two nominations “as leverage to get Senate leaders’ attention for a matter related to Cuba.” That’s business as usual in D.C., of course. It’s unfortunate, though, that a member of the President’s own party would make these two nominations the target of such a tactical maneuver. Revamping science and technology policy has been a key (and welcome) focus of the Obama campaign and transition, and that requires a fully functional OSTP. NOAA also desperately needs the new leadership Lubchenco will bring, especially in light of the delays in filling the Commerce Secretary seat. Let’s hope the Senate moves these nomination quickly.

UPDATE 3/5: [Congressional Quarterly reports](#) that it’s not just Menendez:

Multiple senators have placed anonymous holds on the science advisers’ nominations, according to [John D. Rockefeller IV](#), D-W.Va., chairman of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, which has jurisdiction over the nominations.

The convention of permitting “holds” for reasons unrelated to the qualifications of a nominee is bad enough. To allow those holds to be used anonymously is absurd.