

Chairman Hal Rogers
House Committee on Appropriations
Interior & Environment Subcommittee
Department of the Interior FY15 Budget Hearing
Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell
Tuesday, March 25, 2014
Opening Statement As Prepared

Mr. Chairman, thank you for yielding, and Madame Secretary, thank you for taking the time to be here today.

We are moving along at a brisk pace this year in order to keep this Committee on track to have all 12 appropriations bills passed on the floor by August. We have gotten started with hearings much sooner than we were able to last year, and I appreciate your willingness to take the time to come up here on such a tight schedule.

I have been saying it a lot over the last couple of weeks, but it is critical that we return to regular order to pass our bills. The FY14 omnibus package is a prime example of what we can accomplish when we work together: this Committee was able to provide every facet of the federal government with adequate, responsible funding, while continuing to reduce federal spending – totaling \$165 billion in cuts since fiscal year 2010.

As we have noted in previous years, the Department of Interior oversees a vast government enterprise that houses disparate agencies and missions related to the stewardship of our natural heritage and resources. One of these missions is paramount – your oversight of our nation’s energy and natural resources. Energy is the backbone of the United States economy. Without cheap, reliable energy, businesses that have set up shop in the US will look elsewhere. Uncertainty created by indecisiveness and bureaucratic overreach will inevitably raise energy costs, and push businesses overseas and more Americans onto unemployment lines and welfare rolls.

I’ll just be honest, it is near impossible to understand what this Administration’s energy policy really is. During a weak economic recovery, American families struggling to make ends meet desperately want lower and more consistent energy prices. While the President would like to make it sound as though his Administration has made great progress in expanding domestic production of conventional energy since 2008, the actual picture is far less rosy. Instead of pursuing policies that will guarantee American jobs for our workers and stable prices for consumers, the Administration has sought to institute its own regulation of carbon when it could not work its will with legislation in Congress. The result has been a withering assault on the coal industry by the EPA, using draconian regulations to shut down the permitting process and ensuring that nearly 8,000 miners in my district have lost their jobs over the last two years. At the same time there has been no interest in promoting American jobs through infrastructure projects like the Keystone XL pipeline extension, a bipartisan and publically-supported effort to supply our country with cheap, secure Canadian oil. And while there has been a boom in the

natural gas industry in recent years, it is likely that the environmental interests that this Administration is beholden to will move to shut that down as well.

There is no winner in this approach to American energy policy. What it amounts to is the politicizing of the American economy. Energy costs continue to rise, sorely needed jobs are eliminated, and our energy security is reduced, all in the name of satisfying specialized voting blocs. A recent study completed at Stanford University concluded that proposed carbon tax schemes would disproportionately impact low income Americans more than corporations or the wealthy. While the administration has not been able to get its “Cap and Tax” regime passed by Congress, it has been diligently going about it through regulation. The results are similar to those found in the Stanford study; companies either close up shop or pass along their increased regulation costs on to their customers. My district in Kentucky is one of the poorest in the country, and we are already feeling the devastating impact these policies will have on our nation as a whole.

I am also dismayed at today’s news that despite years of concerns expressed by this Committee, the EPA and the Corps of Engineers are working to create new rules that will place strict new standards on thousands of miles of streams in this country. These are streams which flow seasonally or after heavy rains. By creating this new definition, the Administration is again striking at Kentucky’s economy and workforce, since every hollow and valley in my region has such a stream running through it. This means that no economic activity – no road construction, no coal mining – will occur without the say-so of a bureaucrat in Washington. And another layer of red tape will be added to the Gordian Knot that already has a stranglehold on our people since this Administration declared a war on coal.

Madame Secretary, I look forward to hearing your thoughts on the implications of the actions taken by your agency regarding the production of domestic energy vital to powering our economy. I hope that you can touch on these and other issues in your remarks, so that we may better understand your Department’s plans. Thank you.

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