



Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen

House Committee on Appropriations

**Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
Department of the Interior FY 2018 Budget Hearing
Secretary Ryan Zinke
June 8, 2017
Opening Statement As Prepared**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the time and I also want to welcome Secretary Ryan Zinke to the Appropriations Committee. While it is your first time before this Committee, we welcome you back as a former colleague. We look forward to your testimony and hearing your frank and candid views on the many issues.

Today's hearing is an important part of the oversight duties of this Committee. Now that we have formally received the Administration's budget request, the Committee will undertake a thorough analysis. We will go through each and every budget line, question every witness and demand credible spending justifications and only then will we make our own determinations on the best use of tax-dollars.

We intend to put forward a complete set of appropriations bills that adequately fund important programs while working to reduce or eliminate waste and duplication.

I will work with Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum to move rapidly in coming weeks and months to complete the fiscal year 2018 Appropriations bills.

Again, today's hearing is a part of the process we follow to determine the best use of taxpayer's dollars. After all, the "power of the purse" lies in this building - it is the Constitutional duty of Congress to make spending decisions on behalf of the people we represent at home.

When I travel across the 11th Congressional district, the Department of Interior's strong presence cannot be missed - our two National Historical Parks: Morristown National Historical Park and the Thomas Edison National Historical Park in West Orange, the National Wildlife Refuge System's Great Swamp Wildlife Refuge, sites that are part of the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area and thousands of acres of land preserved from willing sellers through acquisition funding under the Highlands Conservation Act. These historic and natural treasures have been rightly recognized and preserved for future generations.

It should come as no surprise that I am concerned about cuts across the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service and look forward to hearing the Department's rationale for

including them. My constituents, unlike perhaps others you hear from, do not regard the Department of Interior and its employees as the enemy. We are proud of our parks and the men and women who staff them.

In conclusion, I welcome Secretary Zinke. I look forward to hearing from you and working with you in the months ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

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