



## Chairman Ken Calvert

*Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
House Committee on Appropriations*

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Department of the Interior FY19 Budget Hearing  
Opening Statement (as prepared)  
Secretary of the Interior, Ryan Zinke  
Wednesday, April 11, 2018

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This morning I'd like to welcome to the subcommittee the 52<sup>nd</sup> Secretary of the Interior, Ryan Zinke. Joining the Secretary this morning is Olivia Ferriter, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget, Finance, Performance, and Acquisition, as well as Denise Flanagan, Director, Office of Budget.

Our hearing today will address the fiscal year 2019 budget priorities for the Department of the Interior. We look forward to you outlining your goals for the Department and discussing a variety of important issues with us this morning.

We are very pleased to have recently completed work on the fiscal year 2018 budget. The Interior division of the Omnibus made tremendous strides by providing over \$500 million to address longstanding deferred maintenance needs across the Department's various bureaus. Within Indian Country, we provided funding increases for school construction, law enforcement, road maintenance, and water settlements. We allocated an additional \$255 million to the National Park Service, with an emphasis on park operations and deferred maintenance. And, we provided \$530 million to fully fund the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program.

But, as you know Mr. Secretary, last year's challenges remain this year's challenges. As we approach the fiscal year 2019 budget, we will continue addressing the maintenance backlog in our National Parks and across the various Interior bureaus; meeting our legal and moral obligations throughout Indian Country; funding PILT; and numerous other challenges. This subcommittee remains committed to working with the Department to seek solutions to these and many other issues.

Overall, the President's fiscal year 2019 budget request provides \$10.6 billion in discretionary funding for Department of the Interior programs under this subcommittee's jurisdiction which is \$2.4 billion below the fiscal year 2018 enacted level. In fiscal year 2018, Congress clearly had some priorities that were not included in your budget request and I suspect that may be the case again in fiscal year 2019.

In bipartisan fashion—under both Republican and Democrat chairmen—this subcommittee has made a concerted effort to address the greatest needs throughout Indian Country. Education, health care, and law enforcement issues continue to be non-partisan subcommittee priorities—

particularly those that are on the GAO High Risk List. We welcome your active involvement working with us and our American Indian and Alaska Native brothers and sisters.

Another challenge facing the Department and the subcommittee is the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The ESA is a well-intentioned statute that has saved numerous species from extinction. But actually recovering and delisting species remains a challenge and an increasing source of frustration for States and many local communities. This frustration is demonstrated in many ways, including by the number of ESA riders on this appropriations bill in recent years.

The path forward is through partnerships in the field, rather than as adversaries in courtrooms and hearing rooms. The subcommittee has heard from States and non-governmental partners that are willing and able to take on larger roles under the ESA when the Federal Government treats them as equal partners. Flexibilities already inherent in the ESA make these partnerships possible. And the subcommittee is working on a bipartisan basis to foster more of them. We appreciate the Fish and Wildlife Service's willingness to change from within, but we also need your continued leadership. We need conservation without conflict.

I'm glad to see that the USGS budget includes full funding for Landsat 9 and proposes funding for domestic critical minerals inventories. However, it again proposes to eliminate the earthquake early warning system, despite the fact that the West Coast, and my home State of California, is counting on the Survey to develop this technology. It's safe to say that this Subcommittee won't agree to eliminate this program. Instead, I hope you'll work with us to ensure the fiscal year 2018 funding is spent effectively and appropriately, and that you'll provide the Subcommittee with the data we need to make informed decisions for fiscal year 2019.

Lastly, we look forward to hearing the latest on your proposal to reorganize the Department under a framework of common regional boundaries across the Department's bureaus. I applaud your efforts to identify efficiencies and reduce redundancies but also want to stress the importance of seeking input from the many stakeholders at the Federal, State, Tribal and local level who would be affected by such changes.

In closing, again this year I want to express my appreciation to your outstanding professional staff. Our subcommittee couldn't do its work without your budget shop, the various bureaus, and the talented people sitting next to you and behind you. Thanks to each of you for all that you do. With that, I'm happy to yield to the gentle lady from Minnesota – Mrs. McCollum – for any opening remarks she would like to make.

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