

Statement of Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA)
Ranking Democratic Member, House Committee on Natural Resources
Before the Committee on House Administration
Wednesday, March 6, 2013

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Brady, and Members of the Committee, I am pleased to join with Chairman Hastings today to ask for your support for the Natural Resources Committee's budget request for the 113th Congress.

While Chairman Hastings and I have some vigorous debates and disagreements in the House Natural Resources Committee, I agree wholeheartedly with his presentation of the budget facts as they relate to the impact of the cuts that our Committee has experienced over the last two years on our ability to carry out the work entrusted to us by the House.

As you know, the Committee itself is one of the oldest committees in the House, having been originally established as the Committee on Public Lands in 1805 following the Louisiana Purchase. A lot of history resides in this committee, from the admission of States and the development of the West, to emergence of the modern conservation movement and what documentary filmmaker Ken Burns has called "America's Greatest Idea" -- our magnificent system of national parks. But the Committee's jurisdiction goes well beyond our national parks, recreation areas, and seashores and encompasses matters as diverse as oil and gas production both onshore and offshore, relations with Native American peoples, relations with the Insular areas of the United States, management of Bureau of Land Management properties and Forest Service lands, regulation of fisheries and oceans, mining, management of precious water resources in huge regions of the West, and operation of the federal power marketing administrations. In order to be able to carry out the duties entrusted to it by the House over all of these diverse and complex matters, the Committee needs a budget that will enable us to do our job.

As Chairman Hastings has noted, our Committee was already forced to absorb a 6.8% cut in funding for 2011, and faced a further reduction of 6.4% last year. These reductions mean that the Committee is now operating with a budget that is 12.7% less than what it received in 2010 -- a reduction of more than \$1 million in funding.

The Committee and its staff have worked long and hard to prevent these previous cuts from harming our productivity. During the last Congress, the Natural Resources Committee:

- Held 182 oversight or legislative hearings;
- Had 17 full Committee markup sessions in which we reported out 151 bills;
- Brought 81 bills to the floor on the Suspension calendar;
- Brought 37 bills to the floor pursuant to a Rule; and
- Enacted more than 40 public laws.

The record indicates that our Committee has been one of the most active in the House in terms of bills referred to us, hearings we have held, and action we have taken on these bills.

Sustaining this level of effort requires a dedicated professional staff. I appreciate the efforts that Chairman Hastings and our nonpartisan administrative staff have made over the last two years to reduce non-personnel categories of the Committee's budget, but we are nearing the limits of our ability to cut in those areas. As Chairman Hastings has noted, under the request he is submitting for 2013, personnel and salary costs will comprise 94.3% of the Committee's budget.

The budget that Chairman Hastings has submitted provides for a freeze at the 2013 allocation. In my view, even this request is barely sufficient to enable the Committee to do its work. I would therefore strongly urge the Committee to approve a budget that would allow for a 5% increase in funding. This would help bring the Committee's funding back to a more sustainable level.

What the Committee should not do -- in my view -- is to allow sequestration to further slash the Committee's funding. I voted against sequestration when it came before the House because I opposed the type of mindless, across-the-board cuts that it would require. I understand that the Committee is in a difficult position now that no action has been taken by the Congress to eliminate sequestration and replace it with a balanced package of spending reductions and tax reforms. If the Committee approves a Committee funding resolution with an 11% sequestration reduction, it will adversely affect the ability of both the Majority and the Minority to retain and recruit talented and experienced professional staff. The Committee would not be able to maintain the pace of legislative activity to which the Chairman and I are committed, and which the demand from our colleagues requires.

I would note that the Chairman has, consistent with the prior practice of our Committee, allocated 1/3 of the personnel and salary budget to the Minority. We have also agreed to continue the practice of the Committee to employ nonpartisan shared staff responsible for certain shared financial management, administrative, and support functions out of the 2/3rd share for the Majority. We think this arrangement has been fair to both the Majority and the Minority. With respect to staffing, the Majority has also agreed to a 2/3-1/3 split for the Committee staff -- which results in 21 staff slots being allocated to the Minority.

So, I would conclude by reiterating my strong preference that the Committee's budget be increased by 5%. If that is not possible, I would argue that at a minimum the budget should be maintained at the current level in light of the substantial challenges before our Committee this Congress. What we cannot, and should not do, is allow sequestration to harm the ability of Congress to do the oversight and pass the legislation that the American people expect us to be working on.

Thank you.