

Statement of Congressman Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ)
Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources
Before the Committee on House Administration
Wednesday February 11, 2015

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Brady, and Members of the Committee, I am pleased to join with Chairman Bishop today to ask for your support for the Natural Resources Committee's budget request for the 114th Congress.

While Chairman Bishop and I have some vigorous debates 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 number of years on our ability to carry out the work entrusted to us by the House. I fully support Chairman Bishop's stated request of a 2.5% budget increase each year for a total of a 5% increase for the entire duration of the 114th Congress.

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 administration. 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.

Over the course of the last Congress the Committee and its staff have worked long and hard to prevent previous cuts from harming our productivity. During the 113th Congress, the Natural Resources Committee:

- Had a total of 712 bills and resolutions referred to the Committee;
- Held 159 legislative and oversight hearings;
- Had 22 Full Committee markup sessions;
- Was responsible for the House passage of 128 bills;
- Enacted more than 55 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 workforce of Majority, Minority, and nonpartisan staff, and the Chairman and I wish to continue, and hopefully exceed, this level of legislative action in the 114th Congress.

Reiterating the request voiced by Chairman Bishop, the Natural Resources Committee is seeking a 2.5% budget increase for 2015 and 2016. The increased funding levels would be disbursed mainly for staff compensation and travel costs. Both the Chairman and I hope to maintain a full staff consisting of experienced, hardworking, and dedicated professionals who have devoted themselves to the Committee. We are also hoping to hold more frequent field hearings out west in order to speak directly with stakeholders and landowners of the areas and resources the Committee oversees.

I would note that the Chairman has, consistent with the prior practice of our Committee, allocated 1/3 of the personal 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 Minority. With respect to staffing, the Majority has also agreed to a 2/3-1/3 split for Committee staff—which results in 21 staff slots being allocated to the Minority.

In closing, I want to thank Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Brady, and Members of the Committee for allowing us to present our budget request for the 114th Congress. Chairman Bishop and I are both honored and excited to be serving in our new leadership roles, and I look forward to working together in the upcoming years as stewards and managers of our Country's natural resources.

Thank you, I look forward to answering any questions you may have.