

Statement of Chairman Rob Bishop
House Committee on Natural Resources
before the Committee on House Administration
Wednesday, February 15, 2017

Chairman Harper, Ranking Member Brady, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to present the Committee on Natural Resources' budget request for the 115th Congress.

Before I outline our budget request for this Congress, let me first describe some of the important work our Committee accomplished *last* Congress. During the 114th Congress, we held 138 oversight and legislative hearings (including 8 field hearings), 14 markups, and approved 118 bills through the Committee, 73 of which went on to pass the House and 28 that were signed into law. These efforts are not only critically important to Members of our Committee and our individual constituents, but also the entire nation and the American people.

To continue to advance the important work of the Committee this Congress, we are requesting a 2.5% budget increase for 2017 and 2018, based on our authorized levels for the 114th Congress. The majority of our budget is devoted to personnel, and this year's request will help us retain and attract professional and knowledgeable staff to assist in handling the many diverse issue areas within our Committee's broad geographic and subject matter jurisdiction. We have already experienced some movement of our staff to positions within the new Administration, and further such changes are anticipated in coming months.

More than half of our Committee Members—including several newly elected Members—represent districts in western states. As a result, we expect that our travel expenditures will increase due to anticipated continued broader interest and need for field hearings. By definition, field hearings bring lawmakers closer to the people and issues being heard. During the 114th Congress, the Committee held field hearings in New Mexico, Maine, Florida, Utah, Nevada, Louisiana and New York, to name a few locations. These hearings are important for transparency to maximize the American public's awareness.

During my first term as Chairman, our budget reflected an increase in funds dedicated solely to Member and staff travel. We thoughtfully and economically used our resources to support an increased presence throughout the US. We expect the number of field hearings this Congress to be greater than in the 114th Congress and would thus allocate a portion of our awarded increase to our travel program.

At the end of last Congress, the Committee initiated a re-organization of its information technology strategy. This included the hiring of an entirely new IT staff who are focused on modernizing computer software, House-supported storage options, cloud services, and ensuring the security and accessibility of committee data. Today's budget request will ensure these issues

are appropriately addressed this Congress to maintain and improve operations of equipment necessary to handle the Committee's frequent hearings, publications and other needs.

We are pleased that the Committee has found and successfully implemented cost savings and efficiencies, including transitioning to near-paperless hearings and markups, circulating documents electronically, via email and through an intranet link to Members offices prior to hearings and markups. We have also successfully negotiated subscription renewal rates at lower than offered costs, and have moved away from bottled water and instead use filtered water, increasing monthly savings.

In sum, the Committee has made a concerted effort to use our budget conservatively while still maintaining a well-run organization, and we will aim to continue operating in that fashion.

Thank you for your time today and I look forward to answering your questions.