

Statement of Congressman Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member, 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, I am pleased to join with Chairman Bishop today to ask for your support for the Natural Resources Committee's budget request for the 115th Congress.

While Chairman Bishop and I have vigorous debates in the Natural Resources Committee, I agree wholeheartedly with his presentation of the budget facts and the value that a fully funded Committee can provide to the House and the American people. 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 115th 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 the 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. It encompasses matters as diverse as onshore and offshore energy production, relations with Native Americans and the Insular areas of the U.S., management of Bureau of Land Management properties and Forest Service lands, regulation of fisheries and oceans, mining, management of precious water resources, and operation of the federal power marketing administrations. 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 increase productivity. During the 114th Congress, the Natural Resources Committee:

- Had a total of 646 legislative bills and resolutions referred to the Committee;
- Held 137 legislative and oversight hearings;
- Held 14 Full Committee markup sessions;
- Was responsible for the House passage of 95 bills;
- Was responsible for 61 public laws (including all enacted bills).

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 115th Congress.

The Natural Resources Committee is seeking a 2.5% budget increase for 2017 and 2018. 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 and conduct oversight travel, specifically out west, in order to speak directly with stakeholders and landowners in the areas, and related to the resources, the Committee oversees.

I would note that the Chairman has, consistent with the prior practice of our Committee, allocated 1/3 of the 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. 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 Harper, Ranking Member Brady, and Members of the Committee for allowing us to present our budget request for the 115th Congress. Chairman Bishop and I are both honored to continue to serve in our 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.

Biography of Raúl M. Grijalva

Raúl Grijalva began his career in public service as a community organizer in Tucson. Four decades later, he continues to be an advocate for those in need and a voice for the constituents of his home community. From 1974 to 1986, Raúl served on the Tucson Unified School District Governing Board, including six years as Chairman. In 1988, he was elected to the Pima County Board of Supervisors, where he served for the next 15 years, chairing the Board for two of those years. Raúl resigned his seat on the Board of Supervisors in 2002 to seek office in Arizona's newly created Seventh Congressional District. Despite a nine-candidate primary and the challenge of being outspent three-to-one by his closest competitor, Raúl was elected with a 20-point victory, thanks to a diverse coalition of supporters that led the largest volunteer-driven election effort in Arizona.

Throughout his career, Raúl has always fought for underrepresented voices. The passions that drove him as a School Board member to fight for and succeed at implementing bilingual education in Arizona are the same passions that motivated him to help pass the first bond package containing a \$10 million commitment to reinvest in older, poorer neighborhoods while he was a County Supervisor. Likewise, they are what drive him today as he fights to reform our broken immigration system, ensure livable wages for American workers, and create vital land protections to safeguard our nation's natural treasures for the next generation.

In 2014, Raúl was elected Ranking Member of the House Natural Resources Committee by his Democratic colleagues in the House. He also serves on the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and is a Co-Chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, as well as a long-standing member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.