

House Committee on Natural Resources Funding Request for the 119th Congress

*Statement of Chairman Bruce Westerman
before the
Committee on House Administration*

February 11, 2025

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing today to discuss funding for committees of the House of Representatives. Ranking Member Huffman and I are pleased to submit the Committee on Natural Resources' budget request for the 119th Congress. I recognize the challenging task you have in allocating resources among committees and appreciate the opportunity to testify before you.

Before I outline our budget request, I want to familiarize you with the makeup of the Natural Resources Committee. The Natural Resources Committee may not be the most well-known, but we are a high performing committee with jurisdiction that touches the lives of every American.

The committee's five subcommittees have jurisdiction over American energy and minerals, tribal and insular affairs, federal lands and waters, wildlife, and fisheries, as well as oversight of the Department of the Interior and certain agencies within the Departments of Commerce and Agriculture.

We are one of the busiest committees in the House. During the 118th Congress, we reported 161 bills out of committee, held 152 hearings and 21 full committee markups. We also passed over 90 bills on the House floor, many of which were bipartisan bills that went on to become law.

Last Congress we also held 14 field hearings – the most of any House committee - including a field hearing in Guam where we examined the malign influence of the Chinese Communist Party in the Indo-Pacific region, a critical discussion as Congress worked to reauthorize the Compacts of Free Association with the Freely Associated States of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

In the first 19 days of the 119th Congress, the Natural Resources Committee has already moved 16 bills across the House floor.

Yet while we are historically at the top of the list for legislative activity and have jurisdiction spanning from the Arctic Circle to the Marianas Trench and across all 50 states and territories, we fall to number 12 amongst committees when it comes to funding levels.

We are requesting a budget increase of 10% based on authorized levels for 2024. This funding will allow the committee to attract and retain talented staff, fund a robust agenda of field hearings and site visits, and replace our two committee servers which is estimated to cost \$100,000.

Natural Resources has 69 staff positions for majority, minority, and nonpartisan staff. Our extremely hardworking and ambitious staff has expertise on issues vital to our nation, including energy and critical minerals production, forest management, catastrophic wildfires, management of our nation's fisheries and ocean resources, and the federal government's trust responsibility to Indian tribes. Having the means to recruit and retain dedicated staff is paramount to our work on behalf of the American people and to the committee's success.

A priority for me this Congress is for the Natural Resources Committee to continue bringing Congress to the people. Issues involving natural resources are ones you really need to experience outside the Beltway. We have our first field hearing scheduled for April 4th in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, to examine matters relating to health care and economic development in Indian Country.

The best way for Congress to make good policy decisions is to get into the field and understand matters on a local level. With jurisdiction spanning from the forests of the northeast to deserts of the southwest and from the north slope of Alaska to the far-off islands of the South Pacific, robust funding for travel is needed to implement our ambitious agenda and afford as many committee members as possible the opportunity to participate.

Maintaining an aggressive legislative agenda supported by skilled staff and executing the committee's field agenda will require investments in both the Committee's personnel and travel budgets.

Thank you for the opportunity to develop and explain this budget request. You have a critical task, and your decision will impact the work we do at the Committee on Natural Resources. I ask for your favorable consideration and look forward to answering any questions you may have.