



THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

MEMORANDUM

February 1, 2013

TO: Members, Subcommittee on Energy and Power

FROM: Committee Staff

RE: Hearing on “American Energy Security and Innovation: An Assessment of North America’s Energy Resources”

On Tuesday, February 5, 2013, at 10:00 a.m. in room 2322 of the Rayburn House Office Building, the Subcommittee on Energy and Power will hold the first day of a multi-day hearing series entitled “American Energy Security and Innovation.” This day of the hearing will focus on an assessment of North America’s energy resources.

I. WITNESSES

Honorable Adam Sieminski
Administrator
U.S. Energy Information Administration

Mr. Daniel Yergin
Vice Chairman
IHS

Ms. Jennifer Morgan
Director, Climate and Energy Program
World Resources Institute

Ms. Mary J. Hutzler
Distinguished Senior Fellow
Institute for Energy Research

Mr. E. Harry Vidas
Vice President
ICF International

II. BACKGROUND

For decades, a commonly held belief was that the U.S. was rapidly depleting a finite amount of energy resources. The trajectory for energy resources, namely oil, natural gas, and coal, had been projected to run sharply downward. This belief of ever dwindling energy resources helped shape our energy policies and had far reaching impacts across the nation and the economy.

However, scientific research and technological advancements not only have led to massive increases in production, but also to a greater understanding of what energy resources we have. The theory of scarcity has been swept aside by the energy boom that is underway in North America and the U.S. specifically. Estimates for domestic oil and natural gas resources have

increased significantly over the previous decade and show very little signs of slowing. In particular, several areas that are being developed, such as the Bakken formation, which underlies portions of North Dakota and Montana in the U.S. and Saskatchewan province in Canada, have seen oil and gas resource estimates increase significantly. From the first discovery of oil in the Bakken, and for the next 50 years, estimates of oil and gas resources in this formation remained static and low until development began to boom, and then estimates grew almost with each new well that was put in place. This has taken place in areas across North America, from the oil sands in Alberta to the Eagle Ford formation in Texas.

The landscape has changed on the estimates for energy resources and with this new information new questions about whether policies that are guided by scarcity should still be in place. There is increasing concern that because policy makers in Washington, D.C. may be unaware of the vastness of the nation's energy resources, and as a result, energy policy is being developed with incomplete information, which has economic and geopolitical implications.

III. ISSUES

The following issues are expected to be examined at the hearing:

- What information is available on U.S. domestic energy resources?
- How has this information changed in recent years?
- What gaps are there in information on energy resources? How can these gaps be corrected?
- How have technological advancements and exploration increased our knowledge of energy resources, especially oil and natural gas resources?
- What are the implications of the development of America's abundant energy resources? What obstacles exist to developing these resources?
- What are the geopolitical consequences in developing these resources?

IV. STAFF CONTACT

If you have any questions regarding the hearing, please contact Committee staff Tom Hassenboehler or Jason Knox at (202) 225-2927.