



September 7th – Natural Resources Committee Full Committee Markup  
“Certainty for States and Tribes Act”

Vice-Chairman Lummis Opening Statement as Prepared

Thank you Mr. Chairman. My comments will focus on the Certainty for States and Tribes Act. I want to thank Mr. Zinke of Montana for introducing and working with me on this important piece of legislation. The Powder River Basin in Wyoming and Montana account for 40 percent of the coal produced in the United States, and the vast majority of this production is on federal and tribal land. The Secretary of the Interior’s January announcement of a moratorium on new coal leasing jeopardizes on the future of coal production in this area.

× The Certainty for States and Tribes Act sets a responsible timeframe for the Department to complete its review of the federal coal program, including procedures for coal leasing to continue during the process. It also reinstates the Royalty Policy Committee, [REDACTED]. The committee gives states and tribes that rely on mineral production from federal lands within their borders a voice in the decisions made by the Department. Ensuring that those closer to the land have a say in decision-making is just good government.

Back in June, the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee heard from witnesses regarding the effects the coal lease moratorium was having on communities. My home state of Wyoming funds the entirety of its school construction from bonus bids paid on coal lease sales. No lease sales mean no school dollars. Along with the downturn in all energy prices, this has forced serious cuts in education and other public services in Wyoming and contributes to financial difficulties and job losses the coal industry.

I know my Democrat colleagues raised concerns that the previous version of the legislation would have been too prescriptive on the Secretary of the Interior. This committee will consider an amendment with language to address those concerns. I hope with this change my colleagues can work with us to advance this legislation to restore the principals of federalism to mineral resource decisions.