

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Alan S. Lowenthal
Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee Legislative Hearing on

H.R. 1778 (Cheney), To provide that an order by the Secretary of the Interior imposing a moratorium on Federal coal leasing shall not take effect unless a joint resolution of approval is enacted, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3117 (Jenkins), the Transparency and Honesty in Energy Regulations Act of 2017.

H.R. _____ (Emmer), To require congressional approval of any mineral withdrawal or monument designation involving the National Forest System lands in the State of Minnesota, to provide for the renewal of certain mineral leases in such lands, and for other purposes.

July 27, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the panel for being here.

Mr. Chairman, I have mentioned several times that I believe we're working very cooperatively on this subcommittee, and how much I appreciate the willingness of you and your staff to work constructively in a bipartisan manner.

I stand by that, and I believe the three bills in our jurisdiction that we passed out of committee yesterday—including your public lands renewable energy development act that I am a proud cosponsor of—are an example of the sort of thing we can accomplish when we set our minds towards moving forward on good policy.

Unfortunately, the bills before us today are ones that take us in the opposite direction.

They are bills that subvert thoughtful policy decisions beneath short-term giveaways for the oil, gas, coal, and hardrock mining industries.

The most short-sighted of these bills is H.R. 3117, which would tie the hands of federal agencies when it comes to evaluating the true impacts of decisions they make.

I hear time and again from my colleagues across the aisle that the Administration must do proper cost-benefit analyses when they are making major decisions. That's why I'm so puzzled by this bill, which blocks significant costs, from being calculated or accounted for.

Is this fiscal responsibility? Or is this fiscal irresponsibility?

We are already seeing the effects of climate change across our country and the world. Decisions we make today on whether to confront the problem or bury our heads in the sand will have impacts that last far beyond our lifetimes.

Obviously, dumping carbon pollution into the atmosphere provides some short-term benefits to our society. But at the same time, dumping carbon pollution into our atmosphere has great societal costs that we are poised to pass on to our children and grandchildren.

Fiscal responsibility is having a tool in our decision making toolbox that can help us weigh those short-term benefits with those longer-term costs. Fiscal irresponsibility is to pretend those long-term costs don't exist.

It is, of course, impossible to know exactly what those costs will be. But to argue that this means we should simply give up in trying to figure those out, or make very conservative estimates that make today's decisions seem meaningless, that is not only unfair to our grandchildren and their grandchildren, but it is immoral as well.

If we make decisions today that lead to even one less Category 5 hurricane striking the United States by the end of the century, or keep sea level one foot lower, we are not just saving untold hundreds of billions of dollars. We are saving lives.

And I would ask my friends on the Majority side what they believe their great-great-grandchildren's lives should be worth. How much should we discount their lives because they have not been born yet? Seven percent? Three percent?

There is no appropriate way to answer that question. But whatever the economists say, I believe that we owe it to future generations to make smart and moral decisions now.

And the way we do that is to factor in the social cost of emitting greenhouse gases.

This legislation would be a huge boon to the oil, gas, and coal industries, as it would effectively take them off the hook for worrying about the future climate impacts of their actions.

Another bill we're discussing today, H.R. 1778, is more targeted for the coal industry, by forbidding the Secretary of the Interior from exercising their discretionary right to pause new coal leases. This is misguided, and simply ensures an leasing system that is unfair to the taxpayers gets perpetuated.

The third bill, from Mr. Emmer, is an attack on the Boundary Waters and on the Antiquities Act, as it would short-circuit an ongoing process to try to protect a pristine watershed and wilderness in Northern Minnesota.

In the interest of time, I won't comment more on that bill other than to ask unanimous consent to introduce into the record letters of opposition from:

- the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness,
- the Sierra Club,
- the Minnesota Environmental Partnership,
- the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters,
- the Ernest C. Oberholtzer (O-ber-holt-zer) Foundation,
- and one from Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters and the Boundary Waters Business Coalition, which together represent over 265 businesses and 15 hunting and fishing organizations,

as well as an editorial in opposition from Representative McCollum of Minnesota, and an editorial published last year from Walter Mondale and Theodore Roosevelt the Fourth opposing the mining project this bill would push forward.

Disappointingly, all three of these bills would provide benefits for energy and mining companies while doing little if anything for our children or the environment. I hope we get back to discussing more productive legislation in the Fall.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back the balance of my time.