

**Opening Statement**  
**Ranking Member Alan Lowenthal**  
**Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources Legislative Hearing on the**

*Opportunities for the Nation and State to Harness Onshore Resources (ONSHORE) Act*  
*(Discussion Draft)*

**October 13, 2017**

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

Much like the legislation that we discussed two days ago, I have significant concerns with this discussion draft.

This bill would give states the ability to take over oil and gas permitting on federal lands, which I think would be incredibly unwise.

As I have mentioned before, this proposal is built on a number of questionable or incorrect assumptions.

We're told that the federal government takes forever to approve permits, stifling oil and gas companies and causing them to flee from public land.

We're told that there's a huge backlog of unprocessed permits that's stifling job creation and economic growth. Except none of this is true.

The most recent data shows that oil and gas companies hold nearly 8,000 approved federal drilling permits. Permits they could go out and use tomorrow.

And there are barely more than 2,500 permit applications waiting to be processed.

Those numbers alone clearly illustrate that the story about companies desperately waiting for permits from the Bureau of Land Management is just a fairy tale.

This data is so damaging to the Secretary's narrative, in fact, that this week it was reported that BLM will no longer put it on their website.

Yet again, this Administration is just going to hide facts and data that they find inconvenient.

But the reality is that we have a permit glut, not a backlog.

Companies are not fleeing public lands, either. Onshore oil production on federal land went up 78 percent from 2008 to 2015.

That's like saying you're fleeing donuts if you decide to have only three instead of four.

And I wish Mr. Young was here because he bet me one hundred dollars on Wednesday that federal production had gone down.

I have the actual data that shows federal oil production has increased both onshore and offshore, so I look forward to him donating his hundred dollars to help the people in Puerto Rico.

Yes, the federal government generally takes longer than states to approve drilling permits. But that is for a very good reason.

Public lands belong to all Americans. They belong to people who want to use those lands to hunt, fish, graze cattle, canoe, mountain bike, camp, or simply protect special places for our children and grandchildren.

We have laws to make sure that the federal government treads carefully, considers all these potential uses and the impacts they will have, and gives the public a voice in deciding how these lands will be managed.

Critics decry this as “one size fits all” management. In fact, it is the complete opposite. It means really studying a proposed drill site and scrutinizing the potential impacts.

Are there endangered species there? Or historic artifacts? Is it a tribal sacred site? Or right in the middle of an off-road trail crucial for the local economy? Would drilling there hurt elk populations, or cut off a popular fishing site?

The federal government considers all of that. The states don’t have to. Giving them the authority to permit wells, roads, waste facilities and more on public land, as this draft would do, means the federal government would be completely giving up its ability to manage that land.

I certainly believe there are ways the federal government and states can work together more effectively when it comes to energy development.

The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan and sage grouse management plan are just two examples of ways that states have worked collaboratively with the federal government on energy issues. Sadly, both of those efforts are currently being actively undermined by the Trump Administration.

But this draft bill isn’t about collaboration or cooperation. It’s about handing over the keys to the store.

It’s about letting states call the shots on public land, not just on drilling, but on everything else – hunting, fishing, grazing, timber harvesting, recreation, and conservation - that would immediately have to take a back seat to drilling.

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