Questions from Rep. Debbie Dingell for Hilary Cooper, Commissioner, District 1, San Miguel County, CO

1. Ms. Cooper, two of the bills we're considering today would require oil and gas companies to cover the cost of the BLM's inspection and enforcement program by paying a yearly fee. Companies operating in federal waters currently pay these fees, but not those onshore. **In your experience, is there enough oversight of oil and gas operations on public lands, and should taxpayers have to pay for inspection costs?**

Response from Commissioner Hilary Cooper:

In rural counties it often falls on road and bridge crews to monitor the impacts that extend from oil and gas development, specifically the impacts on roads. It takes time and local taxpayer funds to track down the operators and enforce repair of the damages. When the BLM conducts regular inspections, again this is on the back of taxpayers, making local taxpayers pay twice. Oil and gas companies should be paying for their own inspections, not taxpayers. When I need the local building department to come to my house for an electrical or plumbing inspection, I pay the cost. I don't get to rely on taxpayers to foot my bill. Why should an industry, profiting off of our public lands be subsidized by local communities and taxpayers to profit off of our natural resources. This is one more example of how the oil and gas leasing system is broken and needs to be modernized so that oil and gas producers are paying the true cost of extraction.

In Colorado, we now have the ability to enact stronger local oil and gas regulations for production activities on private and state land. We expect to bill inspection costs to the producer, just as we do for any other private development through our building department. The federal government should be doing the same. Our federal agencies are already underfunded in their efforts to manage public lands, they should not be subsidizing an industry that is profiting off public lands when they cannot afford to maintain basic infrastructure.