

*SCIP Oversight Hearing titled “Environmental Justice in Indigenous Communities.”*

*5.13.21*

OPENING STATEMENT

Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you to the witnesses for being with us today.

The Environmental Protection Agency has broadly defined Environmental Justice as “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Established in 2014, the EPA EJ policy for working with federally recognized tribes and indigenous peoples outlines how the agency helps protect the environment and public health in Indian country.

In addition, and to respect Tribal sovereignty and self-governance, the federal government has charged itself with the commitment to fulfilling the Federal trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribal nations through regular, meaningful, consultation on policies that have tribal implications.

Establish November 2000 and reaffirmed in 2009 and 2021, Executive Order 13175 serves an important cornerstone of Federal Indian policy.

Another important cornerstone of Federal Indian policy is the right to tribal self-determination.

Tribes have and continue to show that they are the best stewards of their land and people.

Congress should support decisions they see fit.

I recognize that not all tribes support energy development but there are some that do and conduct those activities with the best intentions of the environment.

I hope that today's hearing will be an opportunity to discuss how we can balance a clean environment while still supporting the energy needs of the country.

A blanket increase in regulations, procedures and other bureaucratic red tape will result in less tribal economic development opportunities that will have a negative effect on their communities.

In closing, I do find it unfortunate that the committee majority is again holding another hearing without the inclusion of the Administration.

As has been noted, the federal government has a treaty and trust responsibility to Indian tribes.

I believe it would be extremely beneficial to hear what the Administration is doing since the President reaffirmed the policy established under Executive Order 13175 and whether any periodic updates to implement the policies and directives of Executive Order 13175, are forthcoming.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

I yield back.