

Chairman Mike Simpson
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Department of the Interior FY14 Budget Hearing
Secretary Ken Salazar
April 11, 2013
Opening Statement As Prepared

The Committee will come to order.

Mr. Secretary, you're a glutton for punishment to return to the subcommittee one last time but we're delighted to have you back again. I'd like to welcome you, along with Rhea Suh, and our good friend, Pam Haze, to today's subcommittee hearing addressing the fiscal year 2014 budget priorities for the Department of the Interior.

In the coming days, Mr. Secretary, you'll be returning to Colorado to your family and will, no doubt, pursue other opportunities outside of government. I have to say that there are days when I'm awfully tempted to go with you—but then I'd miss all of the fun here in Congress! Following your departure, this subcommittee looks forward to working with the next Secretary—Sally Jewell—who will have big boots to fill at the Department.

Let me say on a personal note how much I have enjoyed working closely with you on a number of challenging issues over the last several years. While we haven't agreed on every single issue, you have always let me know where you stand, have always listened to other points of view in trying to find common ground, and have always been an honest broker in trying to solve problems. I'll miss our working relationship. Even as you return to Colorado to pursue a new chapter in life, I have a sneaky suspicion that we haven't heard the last of Ken Salazar.

I'd like to mention a few things before we receive your testimony.

First, it's no secret that sequestration is having a detrimental effect on a number of critical Interior functions. It's for this reason that the House actually proposed in its version of the FY13 Continuing Resolution freezing DOI funding at the FY12 enacted level—in other words, not making additional reductions beyond sequestration. We felt that was the best we could do in this tough budgetary environment.

Unfortunately, things didn't turn out as the House may have liked with regard to the Department's funding which is why I took the extraordinary step of voting "no" on final passage of the FY14 Continuing Resolution.

Mr. Secretary, there are some things in your budget request I can support strongly and, not surprisingly, some things that I'm concerned about. We'll begin a discussion on some of these issues today.

In closing, Mr. Secretary, I want to express my appreciation to your fine professional staff. As I've said many times before, our subcommittee couldn't do its work without the folks next to you and others sitting behind you. I mean that sincerely. Thanks to each of you for everything you do.

With that, I'm happy to yield to the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Moran, for any opening remarks he would like to make.

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