



# **Chairman Ken Calvert**

*Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
House Committee on Appropriations*

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## **FY 2016 Interior, Environment & Related Agencies Appropriations Bill Subcommittee Markup June 10, 2015 Opening Statement As Prepared**

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Good morning and welcome to the Subcommittee markup of the fiscal year 2016 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies bill. I want to thank our colleagues—especially Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey—for joining us today.

Before we get into the details of the bill, I want to take a moment to thank my good friend and our ranking member, Ms. McCollum, for her partnership and work on this bill. I also want to thank each of our Subcommittee Members for their efforts, their active participation in our hearing process this year, and the collegiality that continues to be a hallmark of our Subcommittee's deliberations.

The fiscal year 2016 Interior and Environment bill is funded at \$30.17 billion which is \$246 million below the FY15 enacted level and \$3 billion below the budget request. We have made a sincere effort to prioritize critical needs throughout the bill within its 302(b) allocation. As you all know, we face some serious challenges.

In seven of the last ten years, the costs of fighting wildland fires have exceeded the ten-year rolling average which has been the benchmark for wildland fire suppression budgeting. Fire seasons are becoming longer and more destructive, putting people, communities, and ecosystems at greater risk. The policy of borrowing funds from other programs in order to fight fires makes forests less healthy and fuels more fires and fire-related spending. This is an endless cycle that Congress must address.

In the meantime, the Committee has again provided robust wildland fire funding in its fiscal year 2016 bill. Fire suppression accounts (including the FLAME reserve fund) are again fully funded at the ten-year average level. Significant increases in last year's hazardous fuels management budget have been maintained in the legislation before us today.

This bill also makes critical investments in Indian Country—a non-partisan priority of this subcommittee. Overall, funding for the Indian Health Service is increased by \$145 million (or three percent), while funding for the Bureaus of Indian Affairs and Education is increased by \$165 million (or six percent) from fiscal year 2015 levels—the largest percentage increase in this bill.

The bill fully funds contract support costs and tribal grant school support costs; provides funding to staff newly constructed health facilities; addresses the rising cost of medical inflation; improves public safety; and invests an additional \$103 million in fiscal year 2016 to address critical needs of elementary and secondary schools throughout the BIE system.

This bill provides full funding in fiscal year 2016 for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. PILT payments are made to 49 of the 50 states, as well as to the District of Columbia, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

The bill also provides \$2.7 billion for the National Park Service, including more than \$60 million in new funding relating to the Centennial of the National Park Service.

We have also attempted to address a number of concerns within the Fish and Wildlife Service accounts. The bill funds popular grant programs at slightly above fiscal year 2015 enacted levels. It also provides additional funds to combat international wildlife trafficking; protects fish hatcheries from cuts and closures; continues funding to fight invasive mussels and Asian carp; and reduces the backlog of species that are recovered but not yet de-listed.

The bill also provides \$248 million for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) programs that enjoy broad, bipartisan support. Some Members would prefer more funding; others would prefer less funding for LWCF. We have attempted to forge a middle ground that begins to return the emphasis of LWCF to its original intent of recreation and State and local acquisitions.

Overall, funding for EPA is reduced by \$718 million (or 9 percent) from fiscal year 2015 enacted levels. Several members of the Subcommittee will be pleased to know that the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is maintained at the fiscal year 2015 enacted level of \$300 million. Rural water technical assistance grants and many categorical grants—including radon grants—are also level funded at the fiscal year 2015 enacted level.

Again this year, there is a great deal of concern over the number of regulatory actions being pursued by EPA in the absence of legislation and without clear congressional direction. For this reason, the bill includes a number of provisions to address some of these concerns, and to stop unnecessary and damaging regulatory overreach by the agency.

Before closing, I'd like to make one further point about several Endangered Species Act provisions in this bill. This Subcommittee has no interest in interfering with science and no interest in forcing any species to go extinct. It is concerned about Federal regulatory actions lacking in basic fairness and common sense. Nowhere is this more evident than with sage-grouse.

States are rightfully concerned that a listing or unnecessarily restrictive Federal land use plans will jeopardize existing conservation partnerships with States and private landowners, which are necessary to save the sage-brush ecosystem. This could eliminate jobs and curtail future job growth, devastate State and local economies, and undermine the development of conventional and renewable resources necessary for energy independence.

So long as sage-grouse are not under imminent threat of extinction, cooperative conservation must be given a chance to work. That is why this bill maintains a one-year delay on any decision to list sage-grouse, along with full funding to implement conservation efforts. The Committee will closely monitor efforts by BLM and the States to improve the BLM land use plans over the coming months so that listing sage-grouse is not warranted while States' rights are protected.

This markup is the beginning of a long process and I hope over the coming months we'll come together—as we do each year—to find common ground. In that spirit, I look forward to continuing to work with Ms. McCollum and the Members of the Subcommittee.

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