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**Opening Statement of
Chairman Doc Hastings
Before the Full Committee on Natural Resources
Oversight Hearing on:**

***“Harnessing American Resources to Create Jobs and Address Rising Gasoline Prices:
Families and Cost-of-Life Impacts”***
Wednesday, March 20, 2012, at 10:00 a.m.

Once again, on President Obama’s watch, gasoline prices are nearing a national average of four dollars per gallon. In fact, the current national average price of gasoline is the highest price ever recorded in the month of March.

High gasoline prices impact every aspect of our economy and as a result, inflict real pain on real people.

For workers, it means paying more for their daily commute.

For parents, it means paying more to run errands, take the kids to school and put food on the table.

For businesses, it means higher operation costs, and especially for small businesses, the job creators, it will make them less likely to hire new workers.

For farmers, it means higher costs to operate their equipment and transport their products.

And for local governments, it means increased costs for essential services like police, firefighters and school transportation.

Today, we will hear from economists and energy experts about the financial burden of high gasoline prices and what can be done to alleviate some of that pain.

While there are certainly many factors that contribute to high gasoline prices, we must understand what long-term steps need to be taken to mitigate the spikes in the price of global oil.

The first is to understand where the major long-term resources are.

The truth is that we have abundant energy resources here at home – far more than the 2 percent figure President Obama frequently claims. In fact, just last week, the Washington Post exposed this myth saying that *“This is a lowball figure that does not begin to describe the oil known to be within the U.S. borders.”*

Yet the President continues to use this talking point. The President is purposely misleading the American people and using a rhetorical trick to underestimate America's true energy resources. Despite what President Obama likes to claim, a non partisan 2011 Congressional Research Service report found that the United States is the world's most energy rich country.

Unfortunately, rather than increase American energy production, President Obama has repeatedly blocked access to our own resources. "No, we can't" is simply not an energy policy, yet it seems to be President Obama's only answer to the current rise in gasoline prices.

Since taking office, President Obama has:

- Tossed out a plan to expand offshore drilling and proposed a new plan that keeps the majority of our offshore off-limits,
- Imposed a real and then *de facto* drilling moratorium in the Gulf of Mexico,
- Delayed and canceled offshore lease sales,
- Canceled onshore oil and natural gas leases,
- Withdrew over a million acres of land to oil shale development,
- Blocked the Keystone XL pipeline, and
- Opposed bipartisan legislation to allow energy production in ANWR.

The policy of the Obama Administration is to simply say 'no' - no to American energy and as a result, no to American jobs.

This is why energy production on federal lands has declined. Non-partisan data released last week shows that total energy production on federal lands dropped by seven percent since President Obama took office. Even worse, from 2010 to 2011, total federal oil production was down 14 percent and natural gas production down 11 percent.

These are statistics you won't hear from the President as he embarks today on yet another energy tour. A tour that is a political attempt to defend his Administration's policies, but not the real policies that are contributing to higher gasoline prices.

Although an overwhelming majority of American people support expanding American oil and natural production, President Obama has never missed an opportunity to throw up roadblocks. The President is all talk and no action when it comes to supporting a viable energy plan.

In order to address rising gasoline prices, we must do everything we can to increase production here in the U.S. We have the energy resources; we just need the federal government to get out of the way. This committee will continue to lead the way in that endeavor.