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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

**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:
Family Vacations and U.S. Tourism Industry"***
Tuesday, March 27, 2012

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Today we're meeting to discuss the important issue of rapidly rising gasoline prices and their effect on our economy. Last week we heard from economists and energy experts on the effect of high gasoline prices on the American family and how increased American energy production can help bring down prices. Today's hearing will focus on the impact of high gasoline prices on one of the summer's most important economic engines: tourism and travel.

While President Obama spent last week on a political tour across the country, repeating misleading energy statistics and ignoring the fact that federal oil production fell 14 percent last year, American families were making difficult decisions about spring and summer travel plans.

According to the Wall St Journal, every dollar increase in gas prices means \$2.6 billion a week must be diverted toward the gas pump and away from other spending. This decrease in consumer spending has significant impacts throughout our economy. In 2011, Americans spent 8.4 percent, or \$4,155, of their household income on gasoline—a 25 percent increase from 2010 and the highest since 1981. With many families already running on tight budgets, the extra money spent on gasoline is more than enough to force families to forgo summer vacations, spring break trips or other travel plans.

Beach towns, mountain gateway communities and various other tourist destinations rely heavily on spring and summer travelers for the majority of their yearly income. High gasoline prices can have a crippling effect on the travel and tourism industry as business costs increase, and revenue decreases from the lack of tourists and visitors that can afford to make the trip.

There is no question that price of oil can have the quickest and most direct impact on American's pocketbooks—more expensive gasoline simply makes life more difficult and increases the cost of everything.

There are steps America can take to insulate ourselves from the spikes in the price of global crude oil. It is simply disingenuous for President Obama to say that nothing he can do will affect prices. From nearly the first day in office, the Obama Administration has made it more difficult for America to produce more of our own energy, and we've seen the cost of energy increase across the board.

Not only are the Obama Administration's energy policies causing prices to rise, but they are preventing over a million new American jobs from being created and slowing economic recovery. By closing new areas for offshore energy production, canceling onshore oil and natural gas leases sales, rejecting the Keystone pipeline and refusing to access our known energy resources in ANWR, the Obama Administration is sacrificing good-paying American jobs at a time when we need them most.

We can do more to help reduce the pain being felt at the pump while at the same time creating jobs and making America more secure. The first step should be getting rid of President Obama's "No We Can't" energy approach and saying "yes" to American energy production.

A recent poll found that 65 percent of Americans want to increase offshore drilling—House Republicans have heard the American people and passed a bipartisan plan to expand offshore oil and natural gas production to the areas where we have the most resources. The bipartisan plan also included proposals to produce the over 10 billion barrels of oil in ANWR and encourage the development of 1.5 trillion barrels of oil shale.

America has the resources and the desire to produce more homegrown energy to help lower gasoline prices, keep our small businesses operating and create jobs—we just need the federal government to get out of the way and allow America to become more energy self-sufficient. Producing more American energy is one of the most important ways to help ease the pain at the pump for American families, provide millions of jobs, and protect our economy.