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

**Opening Statement of
Chairman Doc Hastings
House Committee on Natural Resources
At the Full Committee Business Meeting to
Consider a Motion to Authorize the Issuance of Subpoenas
Wednesday, August 1, 2012, at 10:00 a.m.**

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For well over a year, this Committee has showed incredible patience in seeking compliance from the Interior Department on the investigation into why an Interior Department report was edited to appear as though the moratorium was supported by a panel of engineering experts when it was not.

From the very beginning, all we have ever sought was answers. But all we have ever received is stonewalling.

Simple questions we are seeking answers to include:

- How a decision was made by the Obama Administration to impose a drilling moratorium in the Gulf of Mexico that put thousands of people out of work, caused widespread economic harm and decreased energy production.
- Whether the views of the engineering experts were intentionally misrepresented by the Obama Administration in order to justify the moratorium decision.
- How the Administration responded to complaints by the engineering experts following the misrepresentation of their views.

The Department claims to be forthright and transparent, but has refused to comply with document requests seeking answers and is now ignoring a Congressional subpoena issued to Secretary Salazar in April.

The Department's refusal to comply with the subpoena for documents led the Committee to seek necessary information directly from the officials who were most involved in interacting with the engineering experts and drafting and the editing the Drilling Moratorium Report.

Requests were made to conduct transcribed interviews with five Department officials. The Department refused to agree. The importance and value of an on-the-record versus off-the-record session is clear. There is little point in asking questions and receiving unaccountable non-answers in an off-the-record session. The existence of a transcript provides importance purposes. It provides an actual record, versus second-hand characterizations of the answers of the individuals.

After the Department refused the on-the-record interviews by Committee staff, these five individuals were invited to testify and publicly answer questions at a Full Committee hearing last Wednesday. Once again, the Department refused to cooperate.

They were given multiple opportunities, over multiple days, to respond to the invitations to testify. But they refused to respond and commit these five officials to testify. Let me be clear, these individuals will answer questions on the record. A hearing will be rescheduled for September.

Taking steps to issue subpoenas is not the preferred option. In fact, I hope never to have to use this authority. We shouldn't have to compel answers from an Administration that claims to be the most open and transparent in history. But if the Department continues to stonewall, we'll be left with no other choice.

We are here today as a direct result of the Department's actions. The Department has chosen to go down this path by refusing to provide documents, refusing to comply with a Congressional subpoena, refusing on-the-record interviews and refusing to accept invitations to testify. This situation could have been easily avoided if the Department was simply willing to answer questions and turn over documents. The Department is choosing to do this the hard way.

The Department and their Democrat supporters like to claim that this issue has been investigated by the Office of Inspector General and was resolved years ago. However, emails obtained by this Committee raise serious questions about whether the IG's investigation was as complete and thorough as it should have been.

To date, it appears the Department has never disclosed key documents to the IG or to Congress. And this Administration has never answered questions by anyone as how this decision on the moratorium was made that forced thousands of Americans out of work and cost millions of dollars in lost economic activity.

There is no excuse for the Department's behavior. The American people deserve the truth and deserve to have a full account of the circumstances surrounding this matter.

This Committee is committed to getting answers and we'll continue to hold the Administration accountable for their decisions and actions.