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TODD YOUNG
CHIEF OF STAFF

U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Natural Resources

Washington, DC 20515

Opening Statement of The Honorable Doug Lamborn Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources

Oversight hearing on *"Mining in America: Powder River Basin Coal Mining the Benefits and Challenges."*

On Tuesday, July 9, 2013, at 2:00 p.m.
1324 Longworth House Office Building

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Early this year, I drove into Wyoming from my home in Colorado to tour a mine in the Powder River Basin. I was impressed with the operation and the vast extent of the coal resources in the region. Before me was a story of American success, the use of our natural resources to enrich our nation and her people, secure our domestic energy supply, and in the end reclaim those lands for other uses. After that visit, I thought this story, in many ways the American story, deserved a hearing so we could focus on what made this region such a success and how we could use that success to create jobs, increase energy production and economic benefits in other parts of the nation.

About forty percent of the coal mined in the United States comes from the Powder River Basin and the region has tremendous potential. According to a recent United States Geological Survey assessment, "The Powder River Basin of Wyoming and Montana contains about 162 billion short tons of recoverable coal from a total of 1.07 trillion short tons of in-place resources..."

That's a lot of coal – a lot of coal that can be used to generate electricity to light, heat and cool our homes and power our nation's industries and small businesses. It is also a lot of revenue bringing more than a billion dollars to the federal treasury each year.

However, with the onslaught of new regulations effecting the operation of coal-fired power plants, some of which require technology that has not yet been invented or that may never be commercially available, the abundant coal resources from the Powder River Basin and elsewhere around the country may grind to a halt.

The United States has the world's largest supply of known recoverable reserves, or about 24 percent. Coal is found in 38 U.S. states, and nearly one-eighth of the country lies over coal beds. The United States has twice as many BTUs in its coal reserves than the entire world has in its oil reserves. It would be the height of folly to throw this resource away.

Especially at a time when American families are paying nearly double what they spent a decade ago on energy for their homes, Congress needs to look at how to make energy more affordable for families and businesses. Because nearly 40 percent of all electricity in the United States is generated from coal-fired power plants, it makes sense to look at ways to increase coal production from our public lands.

Historically, development of the Powder River Basin coal resources has created family wage jobs, resulted in affordable energy across the country, and brought revenues to the federal, state, tribal, and local government.

Today, workers in the Powder River Basin have a tremendous opportunity to benefit from the expansion of the export market for domestically produced coal. To accomplish this, new partnerships are forming with railroads and export terminals from Canada and the Pacific Northwest to the Gulf and the Atlantic. From Germany to Japan our allies around the world are looking to enhance their energy security. American coal, mined by American workers, generating revenue for the American treasury can and should be a part of their solution for the future.

And yet, it appears to me that every opportunity for a coal miner to work is under attack from the Obama Administration.

Coal has played an important role in the economic development and vitality of the United States – driving the industrialization of the western world – providing abundant, reliable and affordable energy. The Powder River Basin is that American story; it has and can continue to have the potential to do so well into the future.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today.