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Opening Statement of
The Honorable Doug Lamborn
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
At the Oversight Hearing on the
“Effect of the President’s FY 2013 Budget for the U.S. Geological Survey on Private Sector
Job Creation, Hazard Protection, Mineral Resources and Deficit Reduction”
March 22, 2012

We are here today to consider the President’s proposed fiscal year 2013 budget and missions for the U.S. Geological Survey.

Before I go too much further, I’d like to thank the Director and her staff for reaching out and briefing the Members of my subcommittee and their staff on the President’s FY-2013 budget proposal for the USGS. I know that took time and commitment on your part to visit as many offices as you did.

I’m also heartened that the Survey is not saddled with the daunting task of assuming the costs of getting the new landsat satellite launched a task that threatened to consume large portions of the survey’s budget this year and well into the future.

I see that the 2013 budget request for the USGS is \$1.1 billion, an increase of \$34.5 million from the 2012 enacted level maybe somewhat unexpected when our National debt is so high. More unexpected – or maybe it shouldn’t be as it’s a perennial fixture in your budget – is the proposed \$5 million dollar cut to the solid minerals program at your agency.

This is an especially disturbing proposal in this period of resource nationalism exemplified by China’s import restrictions on rare earth elements – something that has not gone unnoticed by the Administration as they announced last week they were joining with Japan and the European Union to file a complaint with the World Trade Organization over China’s policy of restricting export of its rare earth minerals.

That announcement followed by the issuance of the President’s Executive Order on National Defense Preparedness last Friday afternoon in which, Section 306, Strategic and Critical Materials, of that order reads in part; “The Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of the Interior in consultation with the Secretary of Defense as the National Defense Stockpile Manager, are each delegated the authority of the President ... to encourage the exploration, development, and mining of strategic and critical materials and other materials.”

For those of us concerned with national Defense and Economic Security we are very aware that rare earths and rare metals are crucial components of many high tech tools used by the Department of Defense, medical technology, telecommunications and conventional and renewable energy.

That is in part acknowledged in your budget with a \$1 million allocation for rare earth studies. However, copper, other metals, and building materials are also crucial to national defense and our economic security.

Furthermore the energy and minerals programs onshore and offshore provide the most revenue to federal treasury after the IRS. Even the Bureau of Land Management's FY-2013 budget justification for the Energy and Minerals Activity contains this statement; "Energy and mineral resources generate the highest revenue values of any uses of the public lands from royalties, rents, bonuses, sales, and fees."

Instead of maintaining or increasing allocations for conventional energy and the solid minerals programs, the budget proposal emphasizes the Administration's priorities such as: New Energy Frontier (renewable); Youth in the Great Outdoors; Ecosystem Priorities; and Science for Coastal and Ocean Stewardship.

While some of these programs are laudable is it appropriate to increase funding for these programs over the conventional energy and the solid minerals programs that are so crucial to the Nations' national security and economic wellbeing?

Not only that, development of these resources from public lands generates an excellent revenue stream to the federal treasury. The return on investment to the taxpayer is significant.

Just as a reminder, the Survey was founded on March 3, 1879 for the purpose of classifying public lands and to examine geologic structures, mineral resources, and products within and outside the national domain. While that mission has expanded to cover about every resource; in fact if I remember correctly I think I compared it to Genesis and acknowledged the USGS has responsibility for the entire world: the rocks, waters, animals, and air, it sounds like an incredibly daunting job.

I would like to close by reminding everyone, including the Administration, that baseline geologic information allows the United States to make informed decisions on how to best reduce our dependence on foreign sources of fuel and non-fuel mineral resources improving our economic and national security. We're not going to be able to manage our ecosystems, monitor our water or rebuild after a natural disaster without these important natural resources.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today.