

DOC HASTINGS, WA
CHAIRMAN
DON YOUNG, AK
LOUIE GOHMERT, TX
ROB BISHOP, UT
DOUG LAMBORN, CO
ROBERT J. WITTMAN, VA
PAUL C. BROUN, GA
JOHN FLEMING, LA
TOM MCCLINTOCK, CA
GLENN THOMPSON, PA
CYNTHIA LUMMIS, WY
DAN BENISHEK, MI
JEFF DUNCAN, SC
SCOTT R. TIPTON, CO
PAUL A. GOSAR, AZ
RAÚL R. LABRADOR, ID
STEVE SOUTHERLAND II, FL
BILL FLORES, TX
JON RUNYAN, NJ
MARKWAYNE MULLIN, OK
STEVE DAINES, MT
KEVIN CRAMER, ND
DOUG LAMALFA, CA
JASON SMITH, MO
VANCE MCALLISTER, LA
BRADLEY BYRNE, AL

TODD YOUNG
CHIEF OF STAFF

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

PETER A. DeFAZIO, OR
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER
ENI F.H. FALCOMAVAEGA, AS
FRANK PALLONE, JR., NJ
GRACE F. NAPOLITANO, CA
RUSH HOLT, NJ
RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, AZ
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO, GU
JIM COSTA, CA
GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN, CNMI
NIKI TSONGAS, MA
PEDRO R. PIERLUISI, PR
COLLEEN W. HANABUSA, HI
TONY CÁRDENAS, CA
STEVEN HORSFORD, NV
JARED HUFFMAN, CA
RAUL RUIZ, CA
CAROL SHEA-PORTER, NH
ALAN LOWENTHAL, CA
JOE GARCIA, FL
MATTHEW CARTWRIGHT, PA
KATHERINE CLARK, MA

PENNY DODGE
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

Statement of Chairman Don Young
Subcommittee on Indian & Alaska Native Affairs
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 4002 and H.R. 3822
March 27, 2014

Today, the Committee will examine two bills of great importance to three federally recognized Indian tribes.

The first bill is H.R. 4002, sponsored by our Subcommittee colleague, Mr. Mullin at the request of his constituent, the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma. The bill appears to be a non-controversial technical correction relating to the tribe's charter of incorporation, and we look forward to hearing from the Chief of the Miami to explain the need for it.

The other bill, H.R. 3822, is sponsored by Congressman Ben Ray Lujan and cosponsored by Congressman Steve Pearce. H.R. 3822 would provide an equitable division of public land in a closed Army munitions depot known as Fort Wingate, to the Pueblo of Zuni and the Navajo Nation. The lands in question as well as significant portions of the Navajo reservation are located in Mr. Lujan's congressional district, while the Zuni reservation is in Congressman Steve Pearce's district.

H.R. 3822 is the culmination of intense negotiations between the Zuni and Navajo tribes, mediated by Congressmen Lujan, Pearce, and myself. Interest in dividing Fort Wingate between the tribes has a long history, but it was in the last Congress when significant strides were made toward closing a deal.

In the last Congress the Subcommittee held an oversight hearing on the status of negotiations, which at the time had resulted in an agreement between the Zuni Tribe and the President of the Navajo Nation, but not the needed endorsement of the Navajo Nation Council.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the tribes were urged in the strongest terms to reach an agreement both could support in accordance with their laws and constitutions. An undue delay in reaching a deal could have only one result: to let non-tribal individuals and entities pursue

acquisition of the Fort Wingate property, which could permanently foreclose the return of lands to which both tribes claim deep historical and cultural ties.

In reviewing the testimony, I note the Navajo Nation Council has not yet passed requisite legislation to officially endorse the bill. However, there are grounds for optimism because the remaining issues – at least as I see them – are not insurmountable.

Again, time is not on the side of the tribes. Let's hold out hope that the deal will be closed very soon. When it is achieved – and I'm confident it will be -- credit is due in large part to the skill and care that Mr. Lujan has put into the effort as well as the persistence of Mr. Pearce to jump start negotiations when they were stalled.

The Zuni and Navajo should be proud to have these two Gentlemen as their Representatives in the House.