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

Opening Statement by
The Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources
Before the Energy and Mineral Resource Subcommittee
Oversight Hearing on

"Domestic Oil and Natural Gas: Alaskan Resources, Access and Infrastructure"
Wednesday, June 2, 2011
10:00 a.m.

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I would like to thank Chairman Lamborn for holding this important hearing today on the vast energy resources contained in our northernmost state and the unique access and infrastructure issues facing energy production in Alaska. America might not have a single state with more abundant energy resources than the offshore and onshore lands of Alaska. The utilization of those resources is vital to moving America to a future less dependent on foreign sources of energy while creating hundreds of thousands of American jobs.

Certainly, with any form of energy production, there are challenges that must be overcome. However, some of the greatest challenges in Alaska seem to originate from our own government, not the physical characteristics of the Arctic.

In the 1970's the Trans Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) was built to transport up to 2 million barrels per day from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez. TAPS is now operating at less than half capacity due to the federal government's refusal to explore for more oil resources to fill the pipeline in places like the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, or the Beaufort or Chukchi Seas. Critical infrastructure is needed to ensure TAPS remain open. Yet, after years and years, the Administration isn't issuing the necessary permits for the infrastructure to be installed. If capacity isn't increased, the pipeline could shutdown putting thousands of hardworking American's out of work and eliminating a valuable and irreplaceable American asset.

The Obama Administration's effective moratorium on new offshore drilling took the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas out of consideration for the 2012-2017 offshore lease plan. Together those offshore areas contain over 20 billion barrels of oil and over 100 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Fortunately, H.R. 1231, passed out of this Committee and the Full House of Representatives would require the Administration to move forward with lease sales on those areas in the next five year lease plan.

As gasoline prices continue to put a strain on the pocketbooks of American families across the country, it would be irresponsible for Congress to sit idly by and not act to harness the resources in Alaska and elsewhere to make America more energy secure. Alaska's energy resources will play a vital role in America's ability to fuel our economy, create American jobs and lessen our dependence on unstable foreign energy.

Thank you again, Chairman Lamborn and I'm looking forward to hearing testimony from today's witnesses.