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

**Opening Statement of**  
**Chairman Doc Hastings**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Before the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee**  
**Legislative Hearing on:**  
**H.R. 2150, "The National Petroleum Reserve Alaska Access Act"**  
**Thursday, June 16, 2011 10:00 a.m.**

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Chairman Lamborn, thank you for holding this hearing on my bill, H.R. 2150, the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska Access Act. Just last week, I had the privilege of traveling to Alaska and touring, among other areas, the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. I was fortunate to have Don Young and Alaska Governor Sean Parnell accompany me on the trip to show me their extraordinary state.

As we have heard in testimony at prior hearings, Alaskans depend on a robust oil and natural gas industry to fuel their economy and create jobs – and America depends on Alaska to provide safe and reliable energy to sustain and create jobs across the entire country. Alaska is, without a doubt, a tremendous energy asset to our Nation.

The NPR-A was specifically designated in 1923 as a petroleum reserve. Its purpose was to help supply our country with American energy. These oil and natural gas resources should be developed to create jobs here and makes us less dependent on Middle Eastern oil. Development of the NPR-A has enjoyed bipartisan support, including from President Obama and House Democrat leaders. I am very hopeful that will continue with this legislation.

H.R. 2150 expands energy production by requiring that annual lease sales be held in the NPR-A. This is a proposal recently supported by President Obama. However, lease sales alone are not enough. Producing oil and natural gas in the NPR-A is pointless if there's no way to get it out of there.

The real problem is the federal government's blocking and delaying of permits for necessary roads, bridges and pipelines needed to transport the energy out of the NPR-A.

While in Alaska, we visited the site where ConocoPhillips has been waiting for three years to receive a permit to construct a bridge and pipeline over the Colville River. They have discovered oil that is ready to be produced and delivered to the American people. It's unacceptable that the federal government is the obstacle to harnessing this energy – American energy.

To address this problem, the bill sets firm timelines for infrastructure permits to be approved. This will ensure that bureaucratic delays will not prevent oil and natural gas resources from being transported out of the NPR-A.

Further, the development of NPR-A oil is imperative to keep the Trans Alaskan Pipeline System operating. TAPS is the conduit for transporting oil from the far north across Alaska for shipment to Washington state and California for refining and use in the lower 48 states. TAPS at one time conveyed over 2 million barrels of oil a day, but reduced production has left the pipeline at less than half capacity, threatening a shutdown that would impact thousands of good paying jobs.

This bill will help ensure that TAPS stays full and operational. TAPS is arguably the single most important piece of energy infrastructure in our nation. If it was targeted for destruction by a foreign threat, our nation would aggressively defend and protect it. Yet, federal government policies and inaction are threatening to starve TAPS into destruction. We must not let this happen.

NPR-A oil and natural gas is vital to the future of American energy production. As gasoline prices hover at highs near four dollars per gallon, straining American family budgets and driving unemployment over 9 percent, it's imperative Congress take action to increase energy production. Production that would lower prices, create new jobs and lessen our dependence on unstable foreign energy. H.R. 2150 does all of the above.