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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
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Opening Statement of
Chairman Doug Lamborn
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
On Wednesday, February 26th at 10:00a.m.
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Oversight Hearing on “American Energy Jobs: Opportunities for Veterans”

I am very excited to welcome everyone to today’s hearing focusing on well-paying job opportunities for our nation’s warfighters. As more of America’s heroes who serve to protect us abroad return home to civilian life, we cannot ignore the state of our economy and how we can better facilitate the transition of these veterans into rewarding jobs in the private sector. While millions of Americans are still out of work, the situation is even harder for our nation’s veterans – especially younger veterans who served our country in the years since September 11th.

While the nationwide unemployment rate for 2013 rested at 7.4% for the American population at large, unfortunately the unemployment rate for many of our returning heroes was much higher. In the fourth quarter of 2013, post-9/11 vets faced an unemployment rate of 9.1%. Even more troubling is the fact that within this specific population of veterans, those aged 18-24 had an unemployment rate of 14.2%, and those aged 25 to 34 years had an unemployment rate of 10.1%. This is simply unacceptable. And with the military expecting to separate over one million service members over the next several years, we must continue to focus on this issue.

Several other committees in the House of Representatives have conducted important hearings on the many benefits and programs that our nation provides to these warfighters to help aid in their transition to civilian life. What we are here today to discuss in the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee is the vast job opportunities that currently await our nation’s veterans in the field of American energy production.

There is no doubt that the energy industry is one sector of our economy that is currently booming, especially due to development on private lands and we owe it to our veterans to ensure that they are an integral part of this economic boom from increased energy production. For the sake of comparison, the unemployment rate in North Dakota is an astounding 2.6%. This is the state where it takes 10 days to get a permit on private lands, versus 6 to 9 months on federal lands.

The immense job growth that has developed alongside the energy boom has been outpacing growth of every other industry in this country. And these are good jobs - even the entry-level jobs in the field of American energy production are high paying. According to a CRS report requested by this committee in 2013, the average weekly wage of production and non-supervisory employees in the field of oil and natural gas extraction was nearly double (at \$1,535) the total private sector average (which was \$811).

The same can be said of renewable energy development on federal lands – which often times gets tied up in the same red tape that hinders oil and natural gas development. However, each and every barrel of oil or megawatt we generate here on American soil helps to free our nation from a dependence on foreign energy resources.

American energy production is integral to our national security - it helps insulate us from the flux and flow of resources from corrupt energy dictators who wish to use our nation's and other nations' reliance to advance their own political agendas. This all ties back to our nation's warfighters because these men and women are the ones on the frontlines, protecting our nation and advancing U.S. interests abroad – sometimes going toe to toe against those who do not share our same values and wish to do us harm.

The witnesses testifying today will discuss their own experiences in how they chose to join the ranks of the American energy renaissance after separating from their active duty service in the Armed Forces and how the private sector is facilitating this transition for other veterans. I appreciate your service to the Nation and I look forward to your testimony. I also look forward to hearing from our witness from the Department of the Interior – and how existing hiring preferences for veterans are currently being implemented in federal agencies like DOI.

To many of us sitting on this dais, fostering the development of more American energy is a no brainer – it creates millions of direct and indirect jobs, helps to lower prices for American families, and fortifies our national security. We have held hearing after hearing to further elucidate this economic fact. Today's hearing will talk about an important sector of our nation's workforce, American veterans, who are directly benefiting or stand to benefit from this job growth. It is my hope that we can continue to work to advance legislation that only helps to foster this beneficial economic development and an all-of-the-above energy strategy for our country.

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