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

Opening Statement Of
Ranking Republican Rep. Doug Lamborn (CO)
BEFORE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES
LEGISLATIVE HEARING
1324 Longworth House Office Building
May 13, 2010 at 10:00 a.m.

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Legislative hearing on:
Federal Helium Program

Thank you, Mr. Chairman; I want to thank you for holding this hearing today. But before we start I would like to recognize that this as the first hearing of the energy and mineral resources subcommittee since the tragic explosion of the Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf of Mexico. I would like to express my sympathy and offer my condolences to workers whose lives have been cut short and their families whose lives will never be the same.

The Natural Resources Committee has oversight on this offshore leasing spill and the natural resource damages caused by the spill, and it's critical that we continue active engagement on this matter. I know that we have hearings planned on this disaster and that they Committee has been actively engaged and work to address the crisis as well as to answer the questions about what happened and if the government has responded appropriately. This is a major concern for us as a committee and for the entire nation and we will continue to keep the residents of the area in our thoughts.

HEARING

Today's hearing is on our nation's helium program and the National Academies recent report about the effects of the 1996 Helium Privatization Act. Since the helium program's inception in 1925 it has changed substantially. The program has served a broad range of interests over the including: providing for our nation's defense, scientific research, medical needs and aerospace technology. The National Academies examination of the privatization of the helium industry has generated a number of important questions:

- Should the U.S. continue to finish the privatization in the helium industry?
- Should the Bureau of Land Management continue to maintain the long-term storage facility for crude helium? Should the reserve be completely depleted by its current schedule of 2015? And at what rate should the government continue to sell off its helium reserve?

- Also, in our current economic state it is critical to question what the demand and supply of helium is worldwide over a longer term. And after such examination what course of action should the government take for a long term policy?

Our helium program has proven to be a great asset to our defense and our technology development over the past century and we must continue with its responsible management.

CLOSE

I will have a couple of questions for our witnesses and I am looking forward to hearing their testimony.

Mr. Chairman I yield back.