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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
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Opening Statement of
Chairman Don Young
Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs
On Friday, April 26, 2013
1324 Longworth House Office Building Subcommittee Legislative Hearing on
H.R. 1548, "Native American Energy Act"

The Subcommittee is meeting today to receive testimony from the Department of the Interior regarding H.R. 1548, the Native American Energy Act. Except for one change, this bill is identical to legislation reported by the Committee in the 112th Congress, H.R. 3973.

The previous bill was the subject of a hearing in February 2012 in which good testimony was secured by a number of tribal leaders. Until today, we have been missing the views of the Department because it declined to testify last year, and it chose not to provide written comments even after the bill was reported by the Committee.

I want to express my profound disappointment in the Department's written statement.

Mr. Black, I know you've been sent here only as a messenger, because this statement could not have come from Indian Affairs. Neither you nor Assistant Secretary Washburn would write something that is so negative toward our goal of helping tribes manage and benefit from their enormous energy resources.

For those who haven't read this statement, yet, it contains no constructive criticism. Only destructive criticism.

The Department simply states its opposition to the bill and suggests we write a new one.

There is not even an acknowledgment that federal laws, regulations, and policies are impairing the efforts of tribes to develop their resources.

H.R. 1548 was not dreamed up in Washington, D.C. Every provision was requested by at least one or more tribes or Alaska Native Corporations aiming to increase self-governance and to create jobs.

About the only value the Department's statement offers is to prove a point I have repeatedly made before: Indian affairs are at the bottom of the Department's pecking order.

The Administration's reluctance to support tribal efforts to develop energy will not delay this Committee's efforts.

When this hearing is over I will recommend that Chairman Hastings mark it up at the earliest opportunity, where I expect it to pass with bipartisan support.