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**Committee on Natural Resources**  
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**Opening Statement of**  
**Chairman Don Young**  
**Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs**  
**House Committee on Natural Resources**  
**On Tuesday, March 8, 2011 at 11:00 a.m.**  
**1334 Longworth House Office Building**

**Oversight Hearing on: *"The effectiveness of federal spending on Native American programs, and on the President's FY 2012 budget request for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians"***

Today the newly established Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs meets in its first hearing of the 112th Congress. The purpose of today's hearing is to review the President's fiscal year 2012 budget request for Native American programs administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and by the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians. In this hearing, the Subcommittee intends to review the effectiveness of federal spending on programs concerning recognized Indian tribes.

Today, the government borrows money at the same time as it imposes obstacles to the creation of new wealth, such as through the Administration's inaction on oil and gas leasing in the Outer Continental Shelf. As a result, less jobs are created, and the power of the dollar gets weaker and weaker. Fewer places in America feel the effects of America's decline in the production of new wealth and in the strength of the dollar, than Indian Country.

Indian tribes and individual Indians own about 56 million acres of land held in trust. In my state of Alaska, another 44 million acres of land are owned in fee by Alaska Native Corporations.

Together these lands contain abundant resources in conventional and renewable energy, in hard rock minerals and aggregates, and in timber, farming, grazing, and fish and wildlife resources. Through responsible development of these resources, tribes and individual Indians are well-positioned to provide good jobs to tribal members and revenues to tribal governments. They can also help restore the manufacturing base of America that has been lost through the recent, radical expansion of government regulation.

The problem is that outdated federal policies stand in the way of tribal development of their resources. Examples are abundant, but a recent one that comes to mind was when this government denied an Indian tribe with 50 percent unemployment from building a new power plant – all in the name of pleasing special interests.

One goal of today's hearing is to examine whether or not the budget request of the President reflects the policy of Congress to promote genuine tribal self-determination, not the kind of self-determination as defined by special interests.

Another purpose of today's hearing is to question the budget priorities of the President as Congress faces the unhappy, but unavoidable, task of reducing the government's massive deficit and debt.

As we attack the budget deficit, it is imperative for Congress to ensure it upholds its end in treaties and solemn promises made to tribes through Acts of Congress. It also means ensuring money is spent wisely and efficiently for these purposes – not wasted on things like excessive attorney fees in Indian Claims settlements.

In this effort, it is my intent to work on a bipartisan basis with my colleagues on the Committee, and to work with the Administration, to ensure the government is properly consulting with Indian Country to ensure the budget choices made by the House work for the benefit of Native Americans.