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

Opening Statement of
Chairman Don Young
Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs
House Committee on Natural Resources
On Friday, April 1, 2011 at 11:00 a.m.
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Oversight Hearing on:

"Tribal development of energy resources and the creation of energy jobs on Indian lands"

The purpose of today's hearing is to receive testimony from tribal leaders and members about obstacles that are delaying the development of energy resources on Indian lands.

With 56 million acres of Indian lands in the Lower 48 States and 44 million acres of Native Corporation lands in my state of Alaska, Native Americans have enormous potential to contribute to the energy security of this country.

As many of our witnesses know, tribal lands are estimated to contain ten percent of the nation's conventional and renewable energy resources.

This is likely an understatement because federal geologists are typically very conservative in their assessments of energy resources.

Over 15 million acres of Indian lands with energy resources have not been developed. For instance, the Crow Nation has an estimated three percent of the United States' coal resources – exceeding 9 billion recoverable tons.

As gas prices continue to soar and unemployment remains high throughout Indian Country, we should continue to encourage and empower tribes to responsibly develop their energy resources.

However, because of outdated or duplicative federal regulations and laws, tribes often feel that the federal government is treating them unfairly when compared to states and local governments.

Regulatory obstacles such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs' approval of Rights of Way, the Bureau of Land Management's approval of Applications for Permit to Drill, and National Environmental Policy Act red tape are unjust to tribes.

These rules and policies often slow energy development and discourage businesses to invest on tribal lands.

However, laws such as the Energy Policy Act of 2005 are a step in the right direction. More specifically, Title 5 of the Act recognizes the authority of tribal governments to negotiate their own leases. Unfortunately, no tribe has applied for this special authority and this subcommittee will explore reasons why this measure has not been attractive to tribes.

We need to ensure that federal environmental laws do not impede energy development in Indian Country. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Committee and tribes to identify unnecessary laws and regulations, and to write necessary legislation to allow tribes to pursue energy self-determination.