



Committee on Natural Resources

U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, March 13, 2014
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Committee Leaders Send Bicameral, Bipartisan Letter Asking for GAO Oversight on Implementation of Helium Stewardship Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA -04) and Ranking Member Peter Defazio (OR-04), along with Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairwoman Mary Landrieu (D-LA), and Ranking Member Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) sent a letter to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) asking for an examination of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) plans for helium sales, tolling conditions and general oversight of the Helium Stewardship Act before the first sale of the year.

"Last year, Congress enacted the Helium Stewardship Act, a central tenant of which is a new auction-based program designed to inject more competition into helium sales from the Reserve, and establish a fair market price for helium to ensure a fair return to the taxpayer. A key component of facilitating new competition into the helium program is the condition that current refiners who hold access to the Reserve make available tolling capacity at commercially reasonable rates. Failure by BLM to enforce these provisions will result in fewer auction participants, lower prices for helium, and a loss of revenues for taxpayers," wrote the Committee leaders in the letter.

[Click here](#) to read the full letter.

Background

Last year, Congress passed and the President signed into law the [Helium Stewardship Act](#), bipartisan legislation that would create a new auction-based program designed to encourage more competition and sell helium from the Federal Helium Reserve in a responsible manner to prevent a global shortage, protect jobs and the economy, and ensure a fairer return for taxpayers.

The [GAO](#) and [Department of the Interior Inspector General](#) have both issued reports highlighting how previous system of conducting helium sales prevented the taxpayer from getting the best return for their resource. A key component of facilitating new competition into the helium program is the condition that current refiners who hold access to the Reserve make available tolling capacity at commercially reasonable rates. The ability for new participants to access tolling capacity is central to ensuring buyers have the security of knowing they will be able to access and refine crude helium from the Reserve.

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