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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
1330 Longworth House Office Building
January 20, 2010 at 2:00 p.m.

Legislative hearing on:

H.R. 3820, the "*Natural Hazards Risk Reduction Act of 2009*."

Thank you, Mr. Chairman; I want to thank you for holding this hearing today. But before we start I want to say happy New Year and that I look forward to working with you this year. Over the last year, we have seen unemployment of our fellow citizen's rise to over 10 percent. Millions of Americans are crying out for action by Congress to create jobs and spur our economy.

While our Subcommittee can't fix all of America's woes, we do have jurisdiction over powerful tools to create jobs, reduce our deficits and increase our energy independence. As you know, I am an advocate of an All-of-the-Above energy strategy, to create more domestic energy through whatever means we can - be it wind, solar, or traditional oil and gas.

Unfortunately, we have seen little action over the last year on the domestic energy front. As we sit here today, the Administration has yet to issue a single commercial OCS wind farm permit, it has aggressively moved to limit solar development to approximately only 2% of the potential resources in the southwest, the Department has canceled and withdrawn leases from Utah to Montana, and the new OCS plan which was scheduled to start July of 2010, opening for the first time in a generation new areas of the OCS, has been delayed by as long as two years. I hope that this year we can work together to focus the agenda of this subcommittee on domestic job creation and energy development.

HEARING

Today's hearing could not be more timely considering the terrible devastation we saw last week caused by the earthquake in Haiti. The terrible toll on human lives - ended - or forever changed in an instant of natural disaster, is a reminder to all of us of the important protections the earthquake hazard reduction programs have given our citizens.

Over the last decade we have seen tens of thousands killed in earthquakes in China and Haiti and violent earthquakes cause tsunamis that wreaked havoc on Indonesia and Samoa. But here in the domestic US, deaths from earthquakes have been relatively few. Much of this is thanks to our national commitment to hazard reduction programs.

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EARTHQUAKES

We are here today to examine the Natural Hazards Risk Reduction Act of 2009 (HR 3820). Our consideration of this legislation follows action by the House Science Committee from late last year. The Science Committee, during consideration of this legislation, reduced the authorization levels for the Earthquake Hazards program to operate, with the largest reduction taken directly from the U.S. Geological Survey. Specifically, the Science Committee lowered the authorization for the USGS by \$20 million annually. Yet since we know that earthquakes will happen, like other natural disasters, we must find ways to avoid and mitigate damage from earthquakes.

The rationale from the Science Committee is that since budget requests and appropriations haven't met the authorization levels, we should lower the authorizations. The question we must consider is if this is a good decision, or if the Committee should consider the opposite question: has appropriations for this program simply been too low? While the Science Committee may consider the snapshot of earthquake programs, this Committee has the ability to examine the mission of USGS as a whole. We have the chance to question not just the specific earthquake program levels but the entire mission at USGS.

CLIMATE CHANGE

I think we should also examine the broader mission we have now established at USGS. In the Fiscal Year 2010 appropriations, passed by this House and signed by President Obama, Biological resources programs at USGS received a 10% increase and the Climate change programs received a 41% increase, while the USGS Hazards programs saw an increase of just over 2%.

This raises some import questions:

How much of the biological mission that is rapidly growing at the USGS overlaps with work that is conducted at the Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service? Could some of that duplication be eliminated by allowing USGS to refocus appropriations into earthquake hazards programs?

How much of the rapid increase in climate change funding, a 500% increase in 3 years, is diverting funding from earthquake hazard programs? Earthquakes are a clear and present danger, meanwhile the dangers of climate change remains unclear, and the science behind this funding has been called into question by the recent climategate scandals.

Federal budgeting is a question of priorities. How will we allocate our scarce federal dollars? Clearly in the last two budgets the Democrat majority has decided that climate change and biological research are more important than the earthquake hazards. Today's hearing will give us an opportunity to consider if we should cut authorization levels to match the appropriations. Perhaps on another day we should examine the appropriations and the priorities at the entire USGS.

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.

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