

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN DOC HASTINGS

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Witnesses to Committee: S

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the House Natural Resources Committee held an [Oversight Hearing](#) on "State Lands vs. Federal Lands Oil and Gas Production: What State Regulators are doing right." This hearing examined the disparity between oil and gas production on State and Private lands versus production on federal lands.

As recently as President Obama's State of the Union Address, [he touted](#) that U.S. oil production has been at its highest levels in years. But he's only telling the American people half of the truth. As the [Congressional Research Service](#) has noted multiple times, the recent increase in U.S. oil and natural gas production can all be attributed to state and private lands – not federal. So while the Obama Administration would like to take credit for this increase, it's happening in spite of President Obama's policies.

Witnesses at today's hearing were clear in their message to the federal government to get out of the way of much-needed energy production in America. *"The State of Utah essentially has its hands tied in implementing good energy policy because nearly 70% of the State's land is federally owned. When land and energy policies are determined within the political jockeying in Washington, D.C., the outcomes for local communities are almost invariably negative. When Utah is given control of its own lands and natural resources, it has put those lands to productive and environmentally sensitive use,"* **said Utah's Lieutenant Governor Gregory S. Bell.** *"Since 2008, oil production on private and state lands in Utah is up over 96%, while production on federal lands in Utah is only up 4%. Utah has shown it is willing to proactively address looming issues, and that its agencies and leaders are competent to craft and execute state-specific policies and regulations to ensure continued environmental health. The status quo of federal overreach is simply unacceptable."*

Richard Simmers, Chief of the Division of Oil and Gas Resources Management for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources agreed and testified that the best way to regulate oil and gas is at the State level. *"Ohio's oil and gas regulatory program is among the most comprehensive in the country. Ohio's regulations are among the most comprehensive in the country. Ohio continuously strives to evaluate and improve our regulations in response to new information, technologies and developments in the oil and gas industry. I unequivocally believe the regulation of an industry like oil and gas exploration should be administered at the most effective, efficient and economical level, which based on our regulations and highly trained staff, would be at the state level."*

States are doing a better job in exploring, developing and producing oil and gas from state trust and private lands. New leases represent a real-time snap shot of how a given administration's policies translate into real action when it comes to energy production on federal lands. As for the number of new leases issued, during the period of 2009/2010, the number of new leases were forty four percent down (-44%) as compared to the period of 2007/2008. Permits to drill, also down thirty nine percent (-39%) for the same time frame. The third key indicator and most important are newly drilled wells, which are also down thirty nine percent. As for state trust lands, as well as private lands, permits can be secured more quickly and the process is less cumbersome than dealing with the federal government. In all categories, the States lead the way in leasing, permitting, drilling and most important, the production of oil and gas. This administration should look to the states and follow their lead if we are to become energy independent. Sadly, federal policies hamper the development of vitally needed energy.

JERRY E. PATTERSON, Texas Land Commissioner, Texas General Land Office

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