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Opening Statement Of
Ranking Republican Rep. Doug Lamborn (CO)
BEFORE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES
OVERSIGHT AND LEGISLATIVE HEARING
1330 Longworth House Office Building
July 30, 2009 at 10:00 a.m.

Oversight hearing on:
“Unconventional Fuels, Part II: The Promise of Methane Hydrates.”

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for continuing this series of important hearings on the Nation’s future unconventional energy resources. Today’s hearing will focus on the promise of methane hydrates, the development of which was once considered a distant reality because of the technological challenges associated with producing gas from this type of resource.

HYDRATES

Like the research and technological advances needed to develop our deepwater oil and gas and onshore shale gas fields, methane hydrate research will allow the United States and other nation’s to access this important energy resource in the near future. This will be especially important as the United States and other nation’s economies begin to improve and energy demand around the world will again continue to rise.

Many countries will be looking at the possibility of using methane hydrates to meet their domestic natural gas demands.

I am interested in hearing today about the state of methane hydrate research and the opportunities that this research offers the United States in terms of accessing this significant domestic energy resource. However, while the promise of this energy resource is tantalizing, it is important to remember that much of this resource is unavailable for domestic development even if the technology needed to harvest it were available today.

CLOSED ACCESS

Domestically, our methane hydrate resources lie off the coasts in the Outer Continental Shelf and onshore in Alaska. Although it has been more than a year since President Bush lifted the moratorium on OCS leasing and began work to amend the current five year leasing plan we are no closer today in being able to access our conventional or unconventional energy resources, such as methane hydrates, for areas previously under moratoria.

By delaying plan development by six months the Secretary of the Interior has significantly delayed the planning process and hampered the completion of other studies including an environmental impact statements required to develop a final Five-year OCS Leasing Plan. Meanwhile, environmental allies of this administration have filed lawsuits which have stopped all development under the current plan for the Chukchi, Beaufort and the Bering Seas of Alaska, the same areas with such great promise for methane hydrates.

Furthermore, the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee has called upon the Secretary of Interior to stop the planned leasing scheduled for 2011 off the coast of Virginia. The only Atlantic prospect included in the 2007-2012 5-Year OCS plan and an area with significant natural gas prospects. Meanwhile, Dominion Cove Point LNG Terminal in Maryland is receiving Liquefied Natural Gas Imports from Nigeria and Venezuela and Elba Island LNG Terminal in Georgia is receiving imported gas from Egypt. While I don't represent the people of Virginia, I know my constituents would prefer to have the job creation which comes along with domestic leasing rather than the energy dependence created by importing LNG from foreign countries.

Allowing access to our domestic conventional and unconventional resources does three important things:

- Provides an opportunity to create high paying family wage jobs and unique business development opportunities which stimulate the economy;
- Provides a strong revenue stream for federal, state and local government treasuries – which helps improve budgets; and,
- Makes us less dependent on foreign sources of energy – which also helps our ECONOMY.

OTHER HEARINGS

Finally, Mr. Chairman I would like to take this opportunity to also suggest that the Committee continue this series of hearings by examining the tremendous promise of oil shale. As you know Mr. Chairman, I am a strong advocate of oil shale development and I think we would benefit from holding a hearing to get a clear understanding from this Administration on the status of the oil shale commercial leasing program including the cancelation of the Research, Development and Demonstration leases.

CLOSE

There are a number of questions I will have about the technology and promise of methane hydrates and I am looking forward to hearing from the witnesses.

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