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Opening Statement of
The Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources

Oversight Hearing on “America’s Helium Supply: Options for Producing more Helium from Federal Lands”

On Thursday, July 11, 2013 at 9:30 a.m.
1334 Longworth House Office Building

Thank you Chairman Lamborn for holding this hearing today.

By now, I think we all understand how important helium is to our 21st century economy. Medical equipment, computer chips, fiber optic cables and other devices for defense purposes all require helium. It’s vital that we take steps to ensure a stable supply for the future.

In April, the House passed legislation to prevent an impending helium shortage that would occur if the Federal Helium Reserve abruptly closes, as scheduled, later this year. This closure would immediately cut off half of our domestic helium supply and 30 percent of the world’s helium supply while threatening American jobs and innovation. I’m hopeful we’ll be able to get legislation signed into law that will prevent this immediate supply disruption, which would severely harm our economy.

Today we’re examining the next steps that must be taken to continue to ensure a stable supply of helium. The Reserve will eventually close and we need to be prepared for that day. The federal government has been selling helium below market value, which up until now has undercut the private development of alternative sources. That must change and we must start looking towards the future.

Just like we are trying to lower our dependence on foreign oil and rare earth minerals, we need to also ensure that we are not becoming dependent on foreign sources of helium. The only way to prevent that from happening is by increasing production of helium resources here at home.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about the potential for helium production on federal lands and how to make it a reality in order to protect American jobs and our economy.