

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

**Opening Statement of
Chairman Doc Hastings
Committee on Natural Resources
On Wednesday, January 26, 2011, at 10:00 a.m.
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Before the Full Natural Resources Committee
Organizational Meeting**

Welcome Members, staff and guests to the organizational meeting of the Natural Resources Committee for the 112th Congress. I look forward to working with you all.

We have quite a number of new faces on the Committee this Congress. I want to give a special welcome to all of you as you join us for the first time. I've added a time on the agenda to introduce each of you – and we will do that shortly.

I'm pleased to announce the creation of a new Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs, chaired by Congressman Don Young. These issues were previously handled by the Full Committee. A subcommittee specifically dedicated to tribal matters will promote increased consultation on legislation concerning Indians and Alaska Natives. The subcommittee will focus on developing tribal economies and reducing federal obstacles that block job creation and the production of new wealth and investments on Indian lands.

With the broad jurisdiction of this Committee we touch multiple facets of American life. As Members of this Committee, we have a unique responsibility to balance the needs of being good stewards of our resources, while also protecting our most treasured lands and waters.

I want to work together with Members from both sides of the aisle to promote policies that will help restore America's competitiveness, create new American jobs and reflect our society's commitment to a cleaner environment.

The Committee will act to reduce spending and address our national debt that is putting American's economic future at risk. We will set priorities and make tough choices on how to best direct scarce taxpayer dollars. Each subcommittee will thoroughly review the federal budget, looking for ways to reduce spending.

Over the course of this Congress, the Committee will also focus extensively on how to keep and create new American jobs through the responsible use and management of our natural resources.

Federal policies that block access to our resources are making us more reliant on foreign resources that cost American jobs. In order to strengthen our economic competitiveness, the U.S. must reduce our growing reliance on foreign nations for our vital materials and minerals.

With every new bill, program or policy that comes before this Committee, we should constantly be asking:

Can taxpayers afford it?

How will this impact American jobs?

What affect will it have our economy?

And will it increase our dependence on foreign nations?

We must make sure the answers to these questions will positively affect the voters that sent us here.

But our job on this Committee is more than just legislating; we also have a responsibility to conduct thorough oversight of the Executive branch.

This is an area where I believe Congress has failed in the past.

Republicans didn't conduct proper oversight during the Bush Administration, and Democrats haven't conducted proper oversight of the Obama Administration.

Today, that changes. This Committee will not take a "look the other way" approach. However, let me be perfectly clear from the outset: our oversight role is not about playing gotcha.

It's about taking a careful, thoughtful look at the Executive Branch's policies and gaining a clear understanding of how and why decisions are made. It's about shining a spotlight on the agencies, and ensuring the Administration is accountable to the American people.

And while we pursue increased transparency from the Administration, we will hold ourselves to the same standards.

Speaker Boehner has pledged to make Congress more open and transparent, and I support this. Earlier this week I announced that the Committee will be installing cameras in our second hearing room. That means that if anyone desires, they will be able to watch and follow all the proceedings of this Committee.

Our website, <http://naturalresources.house.gov> will also be a one-stop-shop for all Committee information. Committee votes, legislation, amendments, and transcripts will all be posted and made available to the public in a fast, timely manner.

We have a lot of work ahead of us and I look forward to what I'm sure will be lively discussions and debates. And I'm confident in this Committee's ability to carry out the will of the people to promote smart policies that will strengthen our economic competitiveness and protect our environment.

I now recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Markey, for any statement he may have.