

**Chairman Manchin's Opening Statement During a Full
Committee Hearing to Examine the President's Budget Request
for the U.S. Department of the Interior for Fiscal Year 2025**

- The committee will come to order.
- This morning the Committee will discuss the President's proposed FY 2025 budget for the Department of the Interior.
- I'd like to welcome Secretary Haaland, Acting Deputy Secretary Daniel-Davis, and Interior Budget Director Denise Flanagan back to the Committee.
- Thank you for joining us this morning.
- To set the scene, the administration is requesting \$18 billion for the Interior Department for FY 2025, a \$935 million or 5 percent increase over FY 2024 enacted appropriations.
- I think it's important to note for context that Congress has also provided the Department almost \$50 billion in addition to annual appropriations in the last three years through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act.
- I look forward to discussing how the Department is implementing those laws and using this historic funding, in addition to hearing the justifications for this increase from FY 24 enacted levels.
- Now, it's been a year to the day since you were last before the Committee for the FY 2024 budget hearing.
- There have been some highs – from renewing the Compacts of Free Association, which we finally accomplished as part of the

Consolidated Appropriations Act passed in March – to achieving record level energy production.

- I'm also supportive of efforts by Interior to work collaboratively with states to distribute billions of dollars of federal funds Congress provided for the Abandoned Mine Lands Program and the Orphaned Well Program.
- States like West Virginia have done the heavy lifting for decades to power our nation to greatness and still bear the scars of these sacrifices.
- That is why funding to remove orphaned infrastructure and reclaim abandoned mine lands in order to make these communities better and safer places to live is so vital and I look forward to continue working with you to ensure there are no obstacles to distributing these funds going forward.
- I am also pleased to see the budget allocates just over \$1 billion for Land and Water Conservation Fund federal and state programs, as provided by the Great American Outdoor Act.
- The LWCF has helped acquire and protect inholdings in our national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and other public lands to provide important hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation opportunities to the nation.
- I also note your budget includes just over \$1.6 billion in funding for deferred maintenance projects at the National Park Service and other Departmental bureaus, reflecting the final year of funding from the Great American Outdoors Act.

- With \$9.5 billion in funding over the five years of the program, I look forward to getting a better understanding of the progress made in reducing the agencies' deferred maintenance backlog, and the Department's plans for moving forward after this funding expires at the end of this year.
- But with that, there have unfortunately been too many lows, as well, with the Interior Department and broader administration picking favorites when it comes to energy, leading to many instances where the U.S. investment has been discouraged.
- Getting this administration to celebrate the abundant resources our country has been blessed with – whether that be oil, gas, coal, or minerals – that we can produce cleaner and safer than anywhere else in the world, and that we and our friends around the world rely on, should be easy.
- But the radical climate advisors in the White House have put election year politics ahead of a thoughtful and achievable long-term strategy for the country.
- Thinking back to a year ago, Secretary Haaland, we were waiting for the overdue offshore oil and gas five-year plan, which has since been finalized with only 3 potential lease sales over 5 years.
- And as far as we've been able to tell, the Department isn't actually doing the necessary work for that first sale to take place.
- Meanwhile, this administration – just like it they did with Venezuela – has avoided enforcing sanctions on Iranian oil – apparently to try to keep prices down.

- It's just ridiculous to allow Iran to evade sanctions and use its oil to fund its terrorist proxies like Hamas when we're restricting our own production here.
- This paltry lease schedule is not just bad for oil and gas production, it's bad for wind as well.
- You've recently announced a new five-year offshore wind leasing schedule with up to 12 potential lease sales through 2028.
- But let me remind you that the Inflation Reduction Act only allows Interior to issue offshore wind leases if it has held a substantial offshore oil and gas lease sale in the prior year.
- Even if the 3 oil and gas lease sales in this new oil and gas plan went forward, it would mean years of gaps where no wind leases can be issued.
- It makes no sense at all.
- Despite the IRA requirements to hold offshore lease sales, the Department has tried to undermine the law at every turn.
 - First, the Department reduced interest in a lease sale in the Cook Inlet of Alaska by increasing royalties and rents.
 - Then, the administration entered into a sue and settle agreement with environmental groups that, at the last possible minute, removed acreage and added highly restrictive requirements to Lease Sale 261 in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Not only do these decisions make us less energy secure – which, of course, was noted in the internal Department memos on the Alaska

lease sale – they also don't help reduce emissions or overall demand for these types of energy.

- According to the Energy Information Administration's projections, which I know are used by the Interior Department for its modeling, the United States will remain a net exporter of petroleum products through 2050 and global demand for oil and gas will continue to grow.
- And when it comes to production from Federal waters, the Department's own environmental analyses show there would be LESS global emissions by holding MORE offshore oil and gas lease sales — we have some of the strictest standards in the world, so energy produced in America displaces dirtier production elsewhere.
- Unfortunately, the story around efforts to onshore our critical minerals supply chain is no better.
- For example, in the past few weeks the Interior Department also announced a final Environmental Impact Statement effectively canceling the Ambler Road in Alaska – a road necessary for producing critical minerals in the U.S.
- Also, Congress directed the Interior Department in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to provide Congress with a report on improving and expediting the permitting around our domestic critical minerals supply chain.
- But the report we received, which was many, many months late, clearly failed to meet the requirements set by Congress and barely contained any concrete recommendations to actually accelerate mine permitting.

- You don't need to take my word for it. Interior's own Inspector General recently found the Department failed to meet Congress' direction and instructed Interior to provide the additional, legally-required information.
- I look forward to hearing DOI's progress correcting that report, and how Interior is deploying its existing resources and current tools to help tackle the significant permitting issues we are facing.
- Unfortunately, the only explanation that makes sense to me is that the administration would prefer to continue to rely on Chinese-controlled critical minerals supply chains than allow for the domestic production of these critical minerals needed for their electric vehicles, for batteries, for satellites – the list goes on.
- At the end of the day, global demand for oil, gas, and minerals will continue to grow, and we probably won't like who fills the void in our absence.
- But that's what we're in for by continuing to give in to the NIMBY-ism of the far left.
- Secretary Haaland, when it comes to traditional energy and mineral programs that are so crucial to our energy and national security, I must say that for the last few years it has felt like we are repeating the same conversation over and over again.
- I'm tired – and I know other members of this committee are tired – tired of asking again and again when we will see progress on an action required by law and being told “soon” or “we are working on it.”

- Even worse, I'm tired of hearing "I'll get back to you on that" when we just received a few short weeks ago your responses to the Questions For the Record from last year's budget hearing.
- We need, and deserve, better and more timely answers than that, especially given the importance of so much of what the Department of the Interior does.
- So, I am hoping we can have a productive discussion today, and actually get some detailed answers.
- Now I will recognize Senator Barrasso for his opening statement.
- Next, I'll turn to you, Secretary Haaland, for your statement.
- Thank you, Secretary Haaland. Now we'll begin with questions.