

**STATEMENT
OF
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
UNITED STATES SENATE**

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Chairman Bingaman, Senator Murkowski, and Members of the Committee, it is an honor and a privilege to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee for the position of Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management at the U.S. Department of the Interior. I have appeared before this Committee several times for legislative and oversight hearings on public land management issues, and I appreciate the opportunity to come before you today for consideration of my nomination.

Before I begin, I would like to thank President Obama for the confidence he has shown in me by nominating me for this important position. In addition, I wish to express my deep appreciation to Secretary Salazar for his unwavering support of me and his steadfast leadership of the Department. Finally, I want to thank my family and friends for their support, love, and guidance. My gratitude to them knows no bounds; without them, I would not be here today.

I was born in Raleigh, North Carolina, the second of two children. I attended public schools in North Carolina and graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a bachelor's degree in International Studies. I obtained my law degree from Yale Law School. My parents, Doris and Johnnie Burke, who are unfortunately unable to be here today, spent their careers as public school educators. As a result of the example set by my parents, I came to appreciate the value of education—both as a tool for personal growth and as a means of

helping others to achieve their potential. In addition to my love for education, I have a passion for the law. After practicing law in a variety of areas, including environmental law, antitrust, and civil and criminal litigation, my interest in law and education merged and led to a law teaching career.

It was from my position as an Associate Professor of Law at the University of Houston Law Center that I first came to the Department of the Interior. When called to become the Bureau of Land Management's Deputy Director for Programs and Policy in 2009, it was a great honor and opportunity for someone like me who had spent the past 8 years teaching in the areas of property law, land use law, and the management of Federal lands and its natural resources.

My professional experiences, both in teaching and in private law practice, have honed in me a natural instinct to listen and learn first, before making recommendations or decisions. These instincts are further reinforced by my sincere belief in the value of collaboration, consensus building, and transparency in the development and implementation of policies governing the management of the public lands and waters. During my tenure with the Department of the Interior, I have been able to work on a wide variety of complex and challenging natural resources issues. Diverse as they have been, these issues share certain characteristics. First, they almost never lend themselves to easy solutions. Second, their resolution requires a thoughtful, balanced approach that is informed by the needs and perspectives of our stakeholders, both here in Washington and throughout the Nation. Third, they have real and direct consequences for the places where people live, work, and play. I recognize and appreciate the importance of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management. The bureaus over which the Assistant Secretary has administrative oversight span a vast geographical distance and encompass a wide spectrum of responsibilities. I

am committed to the Administration's "all of the above" approach to developing conventional and renewable energy resources both onshore and offshore, in the right places and in the right way. That means that we are always mindful of our responsibilities as stewards for other natural as well as cultural resources. And if confirmed, I would be ready to help advance Secretary Salazar's "Smart from the Start" approach to the development of energy resources, both on- and offshore.

I am keenly aware of the tragic events surrounding the Deepwater Horizon explosion and oil spill. I stand ready to continue to provide leadership and policy guidance to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement as we strive to improve how we fulfill our responsibilities to promote safe and environmentally sound offshore energy development.

By virtue of my tenure with as a Deputy Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), I am well acquainted with the myriad of competing demands that are placed on our public lands. As a result of significant population growth in the West over the past several decades, the need for balanced, consensus-based public land management has never been greater. In meeting its multiple use mission, the BLM must balance a wide array of uses and resources—from mining; to energy—conventional and renewable—to grazing; to timber harvesting; to recreation; to the protection of unique, special, and sensitive cultural and archeological resources, land, species, and habitats.

Finally, I appreciate and support the mission of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement as it works closely with states, tribes, industry, coal mining communities, and public interest groups. Its nationwide program to protect society and the

environment from the adverse effects of surface coal mining operations, while balancing the need for continued coal production as part of our energy portfolio is vitally important.

The opportunity to serve at the Department of the Interior stands alone among my professional experiences. It has been the most challenging, rewarding, and enjoyable professional experience of my life. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with this Committee and continuing this important work with a deep understanding of the awesome responsibility that we have as public servants to manage the lands and waters in our care. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.