

## **OPENING STATEMENT**

### **Introduction**

- The committee will come to order.
- Before we begin, I want to recognize the retirement of our longtime Chief Clerk, Darla Ripchensky [RIP-CHIN-SKEE].
- Darla has a combined 20 years of service in the Senate and for the last 9 years, Darla has worked tirelessly behind the scenes of this Committee running all of our operations.
- Her hard work day in and day out is the backbone of what allows this Committee to do our work.
- I know I speak for all of the members and each staff member – past and present over the last decade – when I say thank you from the bottom of our hearts for everything you have done for us and for your service to the nation.

**[turn to Senator Barrasso for a few words]**

- Now, as a token of our appreciation, we have something to commemorate your time with us and the Senate at large.

**[present Darla with the framed picture, pose for photo alongside Darla and Senator Barrasso]**

- Thank you for your service, Darla!
- Now we'll turn to our hearing today.
- This morning we will be discussing the Department of the Interior's implementation of the bipartisan infrastructure law - the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*.

- I'd like to welcome and thank Tommy Beaudreau (BO-DRO), Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior, for appearing before the Committee today.
- Last year, Congress worked in a bipartisan way to enact the largest federal investments in our nation's infrastructure in decades, including approximately \$100 billion in authorizations and funding for the Department of the Interior and the Department of Energy.
- This, combined with the investments provided in the *Inflation Reduction Act*, will be game changing for us to produce more energy, lead the world in innovation, onshore supply chains, clean up legacy pollution, address drought, plan for wildland fire, and more.
- Last July we held a very thorough business meeting about these provisions in our jurisdiction, during which we considered 74 amendments and agreed to 48 before reporting our portions of the bill with bipartisan support.
- Now that the bipartisan infrastructure bill has been law for just shy of 13 months, we're here today to discuss how the Department of the Interior has been implementing the authorizations and \$28.1 billion we provided them.

### **Helping WV – abandoned mines and orphaned wells**

- I am especially proud that \$16 billion of that funding will specifically help to address an issue very important to my home state of West Virginia – the reclamation of abandoned coal mine lands and the plugging of orphan wells.
- Over \$1.2 billion has already gone out the door to carry out that work.
- Working together with Interior, States are investing in projects that document and plug orphan wells, close dangerous mine shafts, reclaim unstable slopes, restore water supplies, and clean streams by

treating acid mine drainage—all while providing local jobs in those communities.

- Coal communities in West Virginia, and across the country, are proud to have powered our nation for decades and enabled this country to become the superpower of the world.
- Last year’s funding investments recognize those contributions and the scars these communities bear as a result, and provide the funding needed to reinvest in the future of these communities that gave so much.
- In fact, with the Department’s help, the infrastructure bill’s Abandoned Mine Land funding, coupled with the AML fee extension, could result in approximately \$4.3 billion in economic output for the state and 1,730 jobs that will continue for 13 to 15 years in West Virginia.

### **Other funding – forests, water, and minerals**

- Substantial investments were also made to put men and women to work in our Nation’s forests—to make them healthier and less prone to wildfires.
- And at the Bureau of Reclamation, we made historic investments to address the ongoing drought crisis in the West, a key focus for many of our members on this Committee.
- The law also recognized the importance of onshoring our nation’s critical minerals supply chain and reducing our reliance on bad actors abroad to provide our energy needs – something that we doubled down on in the *Inflation Reduction Act* this summer.
- In addition to historic supply chain investments we provided the Department of Energy in the bipartisan infrastructure law, we also came together to accelerate mineral mapping and fund crucial

facilities and research at the US Geological Survey - work that will help us find new mineral deposits and develop the sustainable mines of the future.

### **Missed deadlines**

- Due to the severity of our energy and mineral security challenge, we included aggressive deadlines for action in our legislation.
- Unfortunately, not all of these deadlines have been met, including at the Department of the Interior.
- Senator Murkowski and I sent letters to Secretary Haaland, along with the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Energy, the Director of National Intelligence, back in May after several deadlines related to critical minerals were missed.
- While many of those issues were eventually resolved, last month the Department of the Interior failed to meet another key deadline related to critical minerals – a first step required to improve permitting for new mines.
- And there are more statutory deadlines coming soon for reports that are needed to inform efforts to secure our supply chains and increase our energy security.
- In addition, the one-year deadline to get regulations in place for new authority to permit carbon sequestration on the Outer Continental Shelf also came and went on November 15.
- I look forward to hearing more about how we can work with Interior to move forward on these issues, and at the same time, ensure that future obligations will be met – of which there are many.
- The subsequent *Inflation Reduction Act* mandated specific oil and gas lease sales take place over the next year, created a new requirement that oil and gas leasing take place before renewable leasing and right

of ways are issued, and numerous projects of all kinds are awaiting permits.

- With all of these deadlines looming and actions to be taken from these two historic laws, it is crucial that we have some assurance that the Department of the Interior will get back on track, meet its statutory deadlines, and move with the urgency that the situation requires--and the American people deserve.
- Now I will recognize Senator Barrasso for his opening statement.

**[Senator Barrasso gives opening statement]**

- Next I'll turn to you, Deputy Secretary Beaudreau, for your statement.

**[Beaudreau gives opening statement]**

- Thank you, Deputy Secretary Beaudreau. Now we'll begin with questions.