**Chairman Manchin’s Opening Statement for Shannon Estenoz Nomination Hearing**

**Wednesday, July 10, 2024**

The Committee will come to order.

We meet today to consider the nomination of Shannon Estenoz to be the Deputy Secretary of the Interior.

Ms. Estenoz currently serves as the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

She came before the Committee three years ago, when we considered her for her current position.

Welcome back to the Committee, Ms. Estenoz.

Thank you for being here, for your service, and for your willingness to take on this important task.

We also welcome any members of your family who are with you today, and will give you a chance to introduce them a bit later in the hearing.

As the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks for the past 3 years, Ms. Estenoz, you have had responsibility for the nation’s parks and wildlife refuges and the endangered species program.

As Deputy Secretary, your responsibilities will expand greatly.

The Department of the Interior manages—

* 20 percent of the nation’s land;
* over 700 million acres of subsurface mineral rights; and
* over 3 billion acres on the Outer Continental Shelf.

These lands and waters produce nearly 20 percent of the nation’s energy, including—

* 43 percent of our coal;
* 27 percent of our oil;
* 14 percent of our natural gas;
* Two-thirds of our geothermal energy; and
* much of our wind, solar, and hydropower.

In addition to the parks and refuges you oversee now, the Deputy Secretary also shares responsibility for—

* energy and mineral production;
* dams and reservoirs and irrigation projects;
* grazing and timber;
* insular areas and Indian tribes;
* abandoned mine lands and wildfires.

The Department’s mission is two-pronged, requiring both preservation and production, conservation and wise use.

The Department does not have the luxury to choose one mission over the other; it must fulfill both, and find the right balance between the two.

As the Department’s chief operating officer, the Deputy Secretary of the Interior must play a major role in striking the right balance and keeping the Department on course.

Ms. Estenoz has spent the past 3 years overseeing 2 of the Department’s largest units, which together account for nearly a third of the Department’s budget.

She is familiar with the Department’s mission and the issues facing it.

In her current job, she has had a major hand in—

* tackling the deferred maintenance backlog in our national parks and wildlife refuges pursuant to the Great American Outdoors Act;
* increasing access to outdoor recreation for disadvantaged communities;
* cleaning up orphan wells in the national parks; and
* working with the Defense Department on endangered species recovery.

She has a reputation for being able to understand complex problems, for being able to work collaboratively with others, for being thoughtful and willing to listen, and for working across the aisle.

While my colleagues across the aisle have taken issue with much of what the Department has done throughout this administration – as have I – both the Committee and the full Senate were able to approve her previous nomination without controversy and on voice votes.

I look forward to hearing from Ms. Estenoz this morning on her nomination to take on still greater responsibilities as Deputy Secretary.