

**REMARKS OF U.S. REP. NICK J. RAHALL, II**  
**Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources**  
**before the House Administration Committee**  
**January 27, 2010**

Chairman Brady and Ranking Member Lungren, thank you for allowing my colleague and Ranking Member, Doc Hastings, and me to appear before you to present testimony on the status of our Committee's budget for the first session of the 111th Congress.

The Natural Resources Committee is allocated 69 staffers in total. Of that number, 40 serve the Majority, 20 serve the Minority, and 9 are shared employees. The shared employees include staffers such as the systems administrators, the chief clerk, and the chief financial officer. In that regard, one-third of the salary budget is controlled by the Minority.

As mentioned at last year's budget funding hearing, the remainder of the budget items, such as official travel expenses and supplies, is treated openly. There is no distinction or prejudice between the Majority and the Minority. Computers, copiers, and other equipment are repaired or replaced as needed, without regard to whether it is a Democrat or Republican staffer using them. The same applies with regard to official travel.

In 2009, the Committee requested an amount representing a 4.8 percent increase over the Committee's budget for the second session of the 110th Congress. We received a small fraction below the level requested, an amount totaling \$8,125,517.00 for the first session of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress. Of that amount, and in accordance with the Committee's priorities and procedures, almost \$7.4 million has been spent, according to our most recent monthly financial statement. Additionally, the Committee has approximately \$67,000 in outstanding obligations, which will be paid out for supplies, materials, and equipment received, as well as for services rendered.

In the past year, the Committee has experienced an increase in the cost of some vendor services, such as web site development and web hosting, as well as an increase in the cost of, and need for, additional equipment and office supplies. Conversely, we experienced a substantial spending decrease in the amount budgeted for personnel salaries. We attribute this to a number of unanticipated staff departures and retirements, and I intend to continue to fill those staff vacancies that exist on the Majority side. Also in 2009, the Committee's anticipated travel schedule was constrained and travel was not taken due to the House Floor schedule. Still, nearly 80 oversight and legislative hearings were held in Washington and in the field.

In 2009, nearly 100 legislative measures within the Committee's jurisdiction were shepherded through the House of Representatives. Those measures included addressing wilderness land designations, historic areas, Western water concerns and Native American tribal recognitions among others.

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**In 2010, the Natural Resources Committee continues to be faced with a tall order when it comes to overseeing the work of the Department of the Interior, and fulfilling our stewardship and trust responsibilities. We grappled with some tough decisions last year as we sought to strike a balance between these important responsibilities and other competing needs of our Nation and its citizens. But I am confident in saying that the Members of this Committee have done a commendable job. And I believe that I speak for all of our Members when I tell you today that we intend to continue to do all that we can to keep America's natural and cultural heritage strong while promoting the wise use of our resources.**

**Thank you again for giving us this opportunity to present you with an updated status report on the Committee's budget.**