



Chairman Ken Calvert

*Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations*

**FY 2017 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill – Subcommittee
May 25, 2016
Opening Statement As Prepared**

Good morning and welcome to the Subcommittee markup of the fiscal year 2017 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies bill. I want to thank our colleagues—especially Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey—for joining us today.

Before we get into the details of the bill, I want to take a moment to thank my good friend and our ranking member, Ms. McCollum, for her partnership and work on this bill. I also want to thank each of our Subcommittee Members for their active participation in our hearing process this year and the collegiality that continues to be a hallmark of our Subcommittee’s deliberations. I also want to recognize our friend and colleague, Steve Israel, who is leaving Congress at the end of this year.

The fiscal year 2017 Interior and Environment bill is funded at \$32.095 billion which is \$64 million below the FY16 enacted level and \$1 billion below the budget request. We have made a sincere effort to prioritize critical needs within our 302(b) allocation and in reviewing nearly 5,300 Member requests.

The Committee has again provided robust wildland fire funding in its fiscal year 2017 bill. Fire suppression accounts (including the FLAME reserve fund) are again fully funded at the ten-year average level—which rose by \$133 million from last year. The Committee has also included funds to address many concerns raised about forest health and active forest management, including a \$30 million increase for hazardous fuels accounts.

This bill also makes critical investments in Indian Country—a top priority of this Committee. Overall, funding for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Education is increased by \$72 million (or three percent), while funding for the Indian Health Service is increased by \$271 million (or six percent) from fiscal year 2016 levels—the largest increase in this bill.

The bill fully funds contract support costs and tribal grant school support costs; provides funding to staff newly constructed health facilities; addresses the rising cost of medical inflation; improves public safety; and invests an additional \$40 million in fiscal year 2017 to address critical needs of elementary and secondary schools throughout the BIE system.

This bill provides full funding in fiscal year 2017 for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. The bill also provides \$2.9 billion for the National Park Service, including more than \$65 million in new funding to address the maintenance backlog and other priorities related to the Centennial of the National Park Service.

We have also attempted to address a number of concerns within the Fish and Wildlife Service accounts. The bill funds popular grant programs at slightly above fiscal year 2016 enacted levels. It also provides additional funds to combat international wildlife trafficking; protects fish hatcheries from cuts and closures; continues funding to fight invasive mussels and Asian carp; and reduces the backlog of species that are recovered but not yet de-listed.

The bill also provides \$322 million for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) programs that enjoy broad, bipartisan support.

Overall, funding for EPA is reduced by \$164 million from fiscal year 2016 enacted levels. Several members of the Subcommittee will be pleased to know that the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is maintained at the fiscal year 2016 enacted level of \$300 million.

Again this year, there is a great deal of concern over the number of regulatory actions being pursued by EPA in the absence of legislation and without clear congressional direction. For this reason, the bill includes a number of provisions to address these concerns, and to stop unnecessary and damaging regulatory overreach by the agency.

Before closing, I'd like to make an additional point about an issue of great concern to members of this Committee—the challenges facing not only Flint, Michigan but communities across the country addressing lead in drinking water. This is not a partisan issue.

What occurred in Flint has called greater attention to aging infrastructure and the need for prudent management and oversight of water systems. This bill provides targeted investments and prioritizes resources that will help the EPA, States, and communities respond to Flint and other affected areas nationally by addressing the entire water system.

Specifically, the bill provides an increase of \$207 million above the fiscal year 2016 enacted level for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. It also includes \$50 million for the new Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation (WIFIA) program which may be leveraged through direct Federal loans or loan guarantees to fund \$3 to \$5 billion worth of water infrastructure projects nationwide.

In addition, the bill provides increases for State grants for improved State oversight and operations of drinking water systems, and for communities to work on integrated plans for pipe replacement. The bill also directs the GAO to assess the number of lead service lines by State.

Lastly, the Committee is taking an additional step to provide relief to communities like Flint by including bill language that allows States to use State Revolving Fund (SRF) dollars to forgive a portion of a community's outstanding prior-year loans. This, and other steps taken in this bill, will have a real impact.

This markup is the beginning of a long process and I hope over the coming months we'll come together—as we do each year—to find common ground. In that spirit, I will continue to work with Ms. McCollum and the Members of the Subcommittee.

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