

Full Committee Ranking Member Rep. Norm Dicks

June 20, 2012

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

"I have had the pleasure and the privilege of serving on the Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee throughout my tenure in Congress. The issues under this panel's jurisdiction are important to me, to the constituents in Washington State I represent and, of course, to the nation.

"As a member of this Subcommittee, as the Ranking Member, and as the Chairman, I have always worked with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to address the critical natural resource, public lands and environmental needs of the country. The allocation given to the Subcommittee has never been what I would call robust, nor at a level that in my judgment met all of the obvious needs around the nation. The amount that all of us agreed to in passing the Budget Control Act last summer would have required a lean allocation for Interior in FY2013, to be sure. But the amount that the Chairman has now been given, based on the Ryan budget, would force another round of drastic cuts to important agencies and programs under our jurisdiction. Overall, the bill is 4 percent below last year and 6 percent below the President's request. In addition to another round of special interest, anti-environment riders, the budget for the Environmental Protection Agency would be slashed by 17 percent below last year. The bill also proposes funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund at the lowest level since the program was established in 1965.

"I thought we had learned from last year's experience after considering the proposed Interior bill in the House, with its abysmal level of funding and 39 special interest riders -- essentially including an entire authorizing bill on the back of an appropriations bill. But I regret to say that this year's bill is only marginally better.

"Despite the hyperbole of some of my friends on the other side, EPA programs and regulations did NOT cause this recession. And tying the hands of this important agency certainly will not

get us out of it -- that idea is as fictional as the recent reports of EPA drones in the sky.

"The vast majority of EPA funds get passed through to states and localities, including grants to address the enormous backlog of clean water infrastructure projects which even the Bush Administration's EPA Administrator estimated at \$662 billion back in 2002. These are vital projects that cash-strapped states and localities cannot afford to do themselves. Infrastructure projects actually create real jobs in a sector that has a 14.2 percent unemployment rate.

"There is one positive area in this bill and I will commend the Chairman for once again increasing funding for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Indian Health Service. I am encouraged that there is broad agreement on this Subcommittee that we must meet our obligations to Native Americans. I also want to add my appreciation that the EPA Geographic Program funding for Puget Sound was increased over the President's Budget Request.

"Chairman Simpson, I always enjoyed working with you when I was Chair of this Subcommittee and I greatly appreciated your contributions as Ranking Member. But I certainly don't envy the challenge you are facing with this year's terribly insufficient allocation. The resulting bill would, in my judgment, represent a serious setback in our efforts to protect the environment, to care for the nation's public lands and to preserve America's natural heritage.

"With that I yield back."