

Full Committee Ranking Member Rep. Norm Dicks

June 27th, 2012

- As Prepared For Delivery

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

"I have had the pleasure and the privilege of serving on the Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee for the past 36 years. The issues under this panel's jurisdiction are important to me, to my constituents in Washington State and 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. Throughout the years, 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 agreed to in the Budget Control Act last summer would have undoubtedly required a lean allocation for Interior in FY2013. But the amount allocated based on the Ryan budget, has forced an even deeper round of cuts to the 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 had been hopeful that 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, and that there remain a number of legislative riders are divisive and further complicate consideration of the bill.

"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 will not get us out. We've known for some time now that what is really holding back our economy is a lack of demand, not government regulation.

"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 spur the economy and create real jobs in a sector that has a 14.2 percent unemployment rate.

"On a positive note, the Chairman does deserve recognition for once again increasing funding for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Indian Health Service. I am encouraged that there is broad agreement that we must meet our obligations to Native Americans.

"Chairman Simpson, I thoroughly 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."