

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Whitfield
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Hearing on the “American Energy Security and Innovation: An
Assessment of North America’s Energy Resources”
February 5, 2013**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today, we are going to kick off the subcommittee’s activities, and we are going to do so with a hearing on what many of us consider to be the most significant energy story to emerge in a long time – the potential to truly be more energy secure as a nation. We have long known that we possess an abundance of coal, but the news on oil and natural gas has been a very pleasant surprise.

We have seen increases in domestic oil production since 2007 and natural gas production since 2006, according to the Energy Information Administration. And EIA predicts that these upward trends will continue for years to come.

At the same time, Canadian oil production is growing so fast that we will need the Keystone XL pipeline expansion project to bring the additional output to American refineries in the Midwest and Gulf Coast.

In fact, the news is so promising that some analysts are talking about the possibility of achieving North American energy independence by the end of the decade.

Of course, experts may disagree as to just how much energy potential is out there, but none would have claimed just a few years ago that our nation would reverse course and have the potential to become a true global energy supplier and powerhouse. A quantitative assessment of the resource base is the topic of today’s hearing and what we will hear today shows how the impacts are profound and only beginning to be understood.

I might add that we are seeing a truly dramatic shift away from long-held beliefs about domestic oil and natural gas supplies. So much of our existing legislation is rooted in the assumption of domestic energy scarcity, not energy abundance. Needless to say, a wholesale rethinking of energy policy is in order, and today’s hearing is the first step in that process.

This domestic energy wealth brings with it many issues that will need to be addressed by this subcommittee in the months and years ahead. After all, an abundance of energy alone means little without the right policies in place. Just look at the nation’s abundance of coal, which in my view is being squandered thanks to a long and growing list of anti-coal regulations from the EPA.

As we will soon hear from one of our witnesses, Mary Hutzler of the Institute for Energy Research, America possesses nearly half of the entire world’s coal reserves. This is enough coal to continue its use at current rates for 500 years. We should be making good use of this gift instead of strangling it in red tape.

We want policies that enable our resources to be utilized for the benefit the American people. If we do this right, we can lower energy prices, create jobs, and strengthen national security.

There will be issues related to access, issues related to infrastructure, and issues related to export, among other things that will need to be sorted out. But today, we will focus on the threshold question of how much potential is out there and how this knowledge can help shape the difficult, but remarkable choices we will have to make as a country on how best to use it all.

This includes ensuring a diverse mix of our resources: coal, oil, gas, and renewables, continue to power America. But these and other policy considerations will be the subject of future hearings. We are pleased to welcome the EIA and all of our witnesses today.

The good news is that a future of plentiful, affordable, and reliable supplies of North American energy is no longer just a dream. With today's effort to gain an accurate assessment of the resource base, we are taking the first step in what I hope will be a bipartisan initiative to help turn that dream into a reality.

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