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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

Opening Statement of
The Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources
Before the Energy and Mineral Resource Subcommittee
Legislative Hearing on
H.R. 2011 (Lamborn-CO), "National Strategic and Critical Minerals Policy Act"
H.R. 1314 (Johnson-GA), "Resource Assessment of Rare Earths Act of 2011"
Friday, June 3, 2011

Thank you, Subcommittee Chairman Lamborn for holding this legislative hearing today.

Too often, the importance of our mineral resources gets overlooked. We all understand our need for fuel and electricity, but many Americans don't fully recognize or appreciate the need for minerals.

Minerals are not only the building blocks of the earth, but are indispensable to our health, economy, technology, renewable energy, national defense, and quality of life.

From shampoos to cars, computers and telephones, there is likely not a moment in the day when we don't use a product that is made from minerals.

Even renewable and alternative energy is dependent on minerals. Wind turbines are made with zinc, solar panels require silicon and titanium, and nuclear energy is made from uranium. This is why minerals are vital to achieving an all-of-the-above energy plan and creating new American jobs.

We have vast mineral resources here in the United States, including critical rare earth elements. The USGS released a report last year revealing 13 million metric tons of rare earth elements within known deposits in 14 states. However, it makes no difference what our domestic supplies are if we're unable to harness and mine those minerals.

As is the case with many of our resources, we are failing to adequately produce minerals here at home, in part due to permitting delays and bureaucratic obstacles. As a result, we are increasingly dependent on foreign nations for our critical and essential mineral needs.

China holds 97% of critical rare earth elements, and their threat of tightening supplies puts our economic and natural security in jeopardy.

The United States cannot remain economically competitive if we continue to be left to the mercy of foreign countries for their critical minerals.

And the United States cannot remain economically competitive if we continue to send American jobs overseas.

H.R. 2011, the *National Strategic and Critical Minerals Policy Act of 2011*, lays the groundwork for a fundamental change in the United States' minerals policy.

The bill would require a government-wide survey of our national minerals resources and assess our Nation's ability to meet our own strategic and critical minerals needs.

The bill also requires the Secretary of the Interior to identify factors that are hindering domestic mineral development, such as lack of access and redundant regulatory requirements, and outline areas for improvement.

I believe this bill is an important first step towards increasing our domestic mineral production, creating good-paying American jobs, reducing our dependence on foreign minerals and strengthening our national security.