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TODD YOUNG
CHIEF OF STAFF

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

Opening Statement of
The Honorable Doug Lamborn
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
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"
June 3, 2011

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We are here today to focus on our Nation's Strategic and Critical Minerals Policy. For too long, our national mineral policy has been neglected. Today, as new energy development is increasingly dependent on minerals that are less available, and in some cases the object of a pure monopoly, we can no longer afford to leave our domestic mineral needs on the back burner.

This is not the last hearing that this Committee will hold to consider minerals issues or legislation. There are currently more than a half dozen bills that impact mining and minerals issues pending before the Subcommittee, including a broader rare earth bill by my colleague from Colorado, Mr. Coffman, and I expect that before this Congress is over we will see more bills introduced, considered, and likely passed by this Committee.

America is desperate for jobs. This is even clearer today as we learn that job creation has plummeted in the face of rising energy prices. May job creation was only 54,000 jobs, pushing our unemployment rate back up. American's everywhere are desperate to get our economy running again and building a stronger foundation of domestic mineral supply can be an important aspect of rebuilding our economy. Mining jobs pay better and have better benefits than nearly any other rural community job. The Congressional Research Service has repeatedly reported to the Committee that mining jobs are the top paying nonsupervisory positions in the country. Aren't these the sort of jobs that we want American's to have?

Yet more domestic mining isn't just about the jobs in the mines, its thousands of geologists, biologists, and environmental engineers, it is about the tens of thousands of jobs in the industries that support our miners. From the Caterpillar factories in Illinois to Red Wing Boots in Minnesota, from St. Pierre Chains in Wooster, MA to Airflow Catalyst Systems in Rochester, NY. Americans everywhere benefit from more domestic mining.

The two bills we are going to examine today call for reports from the Department of the Interior to give us a better understanding of resources.

However, these two bills could not be more different in their approaches. In many ways, they represent the fundamental difference that appears so often between those of us on this Committee.

H.R. 2011, the “*National Strategic and Critical Minerals Policy Act*,” will provide essential facts to help us strengthen and improve our national mineral policy:

Specifically, the bill:

- Reiterates existing National Mineral Policy goals;
- Directs the Secretary of the Interior to coordinate a government wide assessment of the Nation’s mineral resources and availability to meet current and future strategic and critical mineral needs;
- Requires the Secretary of the Interior to evaluate factors impacting domestic mineral development, including workforce, access, permitting and duplicative regulatory requirements as well as identify areas for improvement;
- Directs the Interior Department to assemble the report within six months;
- Requires an annual progress report, beginning one year after the date of enactment of the Act for the following two years, outlining the progress made in reaching the policy goals described in the bill;
- And accomplishes this goal with an authorization of \$1 million over a two year period.

H.R. 1314, the “*Resource Assessment of Rare Earths Act of 2011*,” directs the United States Geological Survey (USGS), in cooperation with other foreign geological surveys, to conduct a three-year, comprehensive international assessment of only rare earth elements. But it does all this while calling for a report to Congress in 3 years at a cost of \$10 million.

America is totally dependent on rare earth minerals today. We are losing manufacturing, domestic jobs and weakening our economy every day because we don’t have the supplies of critical minerals necessary to develop our new technologies here at home.

Congress can and must act, and before the Committee today we have two approaches representing the responses of Congress to these challenges. As the author of one of these bills, I hope this hearing will help the American people clearly judge the options before us in Congress and the plans and policies that are put forward to solve the challenges facing America.

Developing our Nation’s mineral resources is not only an integral part of an all-of-the-above energy plan but it will create long-term family wage jobs, stimulate our economy and reduce our foreign dependence on mineral resources.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today.