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**Committee on Natural Resources**  
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**Opening Statement of**  
**Chairman Doc Hastings**  
**House Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Oversight Hearing On:**  
***"Creating American Jobs by Harnessing Our Resources:***  
***Domestic Mining Opportunities and Hurdles"***  
**Wednesday, September 14, 2011, at 10:00AM**

Today's hearing is the second installment in an ongoing oversight series that this Committee will have "Creating American Jobs by Harnessing our Resources." Last week we examined offshore and renewable energy potentials for jobs creation and today we will look at the job creating potential for domestic mining and possible hurdles the industry will need to overcome.

America's coal and hardrock mining industries contribute significantly to the U.S. economy and are the source for hundreds of thousands of direct jobs around the country. Nationally, a recent study by PricewaterhouseCooper found U.S. mining directly and indirectly supported nearly 1.8 million jobs in 2008 and gave \$189 billion to America's GDP.

Of those 1.8 million jobs, over 500,000 are coal mining jobs that add \$36 billion in labor income with average wages at approximately \$72,000 per year. America's coal mining industry is a vital component to rural communities across the country that relies on mining jobs for steady, good paying employment. The rest of the country benefits from coalminers' hard work as nearly 50% of U.S. electricity generation come from coal fired power plants that provide cheap, reliable electricity to millions of American families.

Fortunately for America's current and future coalminers, the U.S. has hundreds of years of technically recoverable coal to be mined. A recent CRS report found that the U.S. has the world's largest coal supply with 261 billion short tons—88 billion short tons more than Russia, the country with the second largest reserve.

However, while the coal mining employment has risen by 8.5 percent since 2001, there are serious concerns about Obama Administration rules and regulations that threaten jobs and future of one of America's proudest industries. The Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation and Enforcement has released a new proposed "Stream Buffer Zone" rule that by the Administration's own estimate could cost at least 7,000 mining jobs and reduce coal production in 22 states. This revised rule seems as unnecessary as it is harmful to job creation as it comes on the heels of a two year rulemaking process, finalized in December 2008 that included extensive environmental analyses and public comment.

Other burdensome Obama Administration rules threaten coal jobs including the EPA's Cross-State Air Pollution Rule. Yesterday, Luminant, a leading Texas power generator announced the 500 potential layoffs due to compliance with this onerous rule.

Uranium mining is another prime mining opportunity for American job creation. Unfortunately, under the guise of protecting the Grand Canyon, one of our National's great national treasures that we all agree should be preserved, the Obama Administration has actively blocked access to nearly 40 percent of America's uranium resources. Even after the Arizona Geological Survey concluded uranium mining near the Grand Canyon would be environmentally safe, the Administration chose to send thousands of jobs overseas and deepen our already 90 percent dependence on foreign countries for uranium. America uranium is the key to moving America toward a more self-sufficient and clean energy future through expanded nuclear power and we cannot afford to turn down opportunities to advance increased American job creation and energy efficiency.

America's mining resources hold incredible potential for job creation and economic growth if we simply allow access to our abundant resources. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about what Congress and this Committee can do to increase the opportunities to allow America's mining industry to grow and continue its significant contribution to the economy.