

U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Natural Resources

Washington, DC 20515

March 4, 2019

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
Chair
Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chair:

With one month of Committee activity behind us, and especially given the circumstances surrounding the swift adjournment of the February 26th Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing, I write to share some concerns about the Committee's operations.

Majority's Failure to Address Issues Within the Jurisdiction of the Committee

House Rule X outlines the organization of committees and their jurisdictions. Ours is the principal committee of jurisdiction for such matters relating to federally-owned lands and waters, relations with Native Americans, and insular affairs, among others outlined in 21 subparagraphs under Rule X(m).¹ Last Tuesday's very brief Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing was adjourned because the majority of attending members viewed the hearing's subject matter was outside the Committee's jurisdiction. The Majority invited witnesses whose testimony addressed head injuries in professional football, the opioid crisis, and tobacco litigation.² These are subject areas within the jurisdiction of either the Energy and Commerce or Science, Space, and Technology Committees.³

Majority's Refusal to Consider Economic Impact of Proposed Legislation

To date, the Committee has held over 13 ½ hours of hearings with 35 witnesses. Many of the Majority witnesses have proposed that the United States undertake a radical transformation to combat climate change, with seemingly no regard to the impact on the economy, jobs, or energy prices. For example, at the Committee's first hearing, the Majority invited testimony from a 16-year-old who is a founder of an organization which describes free-market capitalism as a "system of oppression" akin to "colonialism, racism, and patriarchy."⁴

¹ Rule X(m), Rules of the House of Representatives (116th Cong.).

² *The Denial Playbook: How Industries Manipulate Science and Policy from Climate Change to Public Health: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Oversight and Investigations of the H. Comm. on Natural Resources*, 116th Cong. (2019).

³ See Rule X(f), (p), Rules of the House of Representatives (116th Cong.).

⁴ *Our Guiding Principles*, ZERO HOUR, <http://thisiszerohour.org/files/zh-guiding-principles-web.pdf> (last visited Mar. 1, 2019).

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva

March 4, 2019

Page 2

Republicans proposed to amend our Committee rules to ensure that bill reports include the effect of legislation on the economy of the immediate geographic area affected by the legislation. This amendment received some supportive words from the Majority, but ultimately failed on a partisan vote. One Democrat who voted against the amendment admitted that the Committee should be “very mindful of the people, their jobs, their ability to pay their bills because of the changes that we make. And this is a discussion that should always be had. We shouldn't just be speaking in the theoretical and the scientific.”⁵

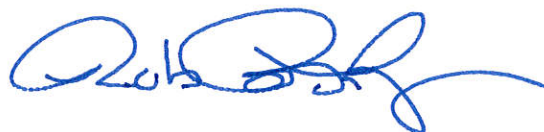
The important question facing the Committee is not whether we are all going to die in 12 years if we continue to eat hamburgers. We won't. We should be pursuing practical ways – within our jurisdiction – to reduce pollution and promote a healthier environment without decimating American families' checkbooks. To that end, the Committee should reconsider this amendment, especially given the extreme policy proposals discussed during February's hearings.

Majority's Failure to Provide a Publicly-Available Hearing Memorandum

We need to make efficient use of the Committee's limited time and resources by holding hearings within our jurisdiction, inviting witnesses relevant to our subject matter, and operating with transparency. The purpose underpinning oversight hearings would be clearer to all Members of the Committee as well as the public if the Majority complied with Committee Rule 4(c) which requires that “to the extent practicable the Majority staff shall make publicly available a memorandum explaining the subject matter of the hearing.”⁶ This practice was followed for the past two Congresses without any major difficulties. I commend Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee Chair Lowenthal's recent release of a public memorandum detailing the Majority's objectives for his March 6th hearing. Such transparency will no doubt lead to better testimony from the witnesses, participation by the Members, and understanding by the press and American people.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,



Rob Bishop
Ranking Republican
Committee on Natural Resources

⁵ *Organizational Meeting of the H. Comm. on Natural Resources*, 116th Cong. (2019) (statement of Rep. Jeff Van Drew).

⁶ Rules for the Comm. on Natural Resources, 116th Cong. (Jan. 30, 2019).