

Rep. Cheney Opening Statement

- I want to thank Chairman Gosar and Chairman Bishop for holding this hearing today on H.R. 1778.
- I also want to thank Travis Deti from the Wyoming Mining Association for his willingness to come testify before the committee on this critical bill for our state.
- Mr. Chairman, Wyoming mines more coal than any other state in the union.
- It is a key driver of our economy, which was devastated by President Obama's war on coal.
- The misguided policies of the previous administration were aimed at destroying our fossil fuel industry.
- However, the effects were felt most by the people in my state who lost good-paying mining jobs and the communities that were devastated by drastic reductions in the economic activity our coal industry supports.
- In Wyoming, this was not a war on coal, this was a direct attack on the livelihoods of the people of my state.
- Thankfully President Trump and Secretary Zinke have made tremendous progress on rolling back and repealing many of these burdensome and unnecessary policies.
- For instance, this past March Secretary Zinke repealed the previous administrations moratorium on new coal leases on federal land.
- Nearly half of the land in Wyoming is owned by the federal government.
- Removing the ban on new coal leases lifted a policy that disproportionately impacted my state.
- H.R. 1778 builds on Secretary Zinke's action by protecting Congress's constitutional authority to oversee property owned by the United States.

- Specifically, my bill ensures no Secretary of the Interior can close off federal land to coal leases without first seeking congressional approval.
- While Congress allows the Department of the Interior to oversee the day-to-day management of our federal public lands, Congress should not allow the department to unilaterally make major policy changes like instituting a ban on new coal leases.
- Ultimately, this is a Constitutional authority issue.
- We were elected by our constituents to represent them and their interests.
- Yet, when we allow unelected bureaucrats to make decisions that devastate our communities on issues that our founders specifically authorized Congress to decide, we undermine the institution we serve and worse yet we diminish the voice of the people we are here to represent.
- The people of Wyoming deserve better and that's why I introduced the bill before us today.
- I look forward to today's hearing, I thank the chair and the witnesses, and I yield back the balance of my time.