

Statement of Secretary Doug Burgum
United States Department of the Interior
Before the Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
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Chair Murkowski, Ranking Member Merkley, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of President Trump's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Blueprint request for the Department of the Interior and discuss what our team is doing to make America safer, stronger, more beautiful, and more prosperous.

The Department of the Interior oversees onshore and offshore energy resources, honors Federal Trust responsibilities with our tribal neighbors, delivers water to the West, and oversees wildlife refuges and national parks. The resources that we sustainably govern directly impact the lives of every American every day.

Interior-managed resources hold a significant position on America's Balance Sheet. The public lands and minerals within the Interior domain include more than 480 million acres of surface land, 750 million acres of subsurface and mineral estate, and more than 2.5 billion acres offshore. We believe that our natural resources are national assets that should be responsibly developed to grow our economy, help balance the Budget, and generate revenue for American taxpayers. With common sense approaches and modern systems, we can increase returns for our citizens, strengthen our economy, and create great-paying and meaningful jobs -- all while protecting our beautiful lands, our abundant wildlife, and our clean air and clean water.

The President's 2026 Budget blueprint requests \$11.9 billion in current authority for the Department of the Interior, providing significant savings to the American people. Of that amount, \$10.6 billion is within the jurisdiction of the Interior-Environment Appropriations Subcommittee. The 2026 Budget blueprint was provided so your Subcommittee may begin debate and consideration of appropriations bills for the upcoming fiscal year.

Unleashing American Energy. The 2026 Budget for the Department features strategic investments to further President Trump's commitment to Energy Dominance, which is the foundation of American prosperity, national security, and world peace.

This Budget prioritizes America's energy independence with a strategy that focuses on the development of ample baseload power that is needed to solve the inherited electricity crisis which underpins the National Energy Emergency that was wisely declared by President Trump on his first day in office. The Department of the Interior has already taken meaningful measures to reverse the mountains of red tape intended to suppress US energy production. We are increasing production of affordable, reliable energy on federal lands and reviving our nation's understanding of the national security need for mining for critical, rare earths, and other important minerals. The Budget also advances key national priorities including enhanced border security, an optimized workforce that leverages resources and maximizes taxpayer dollars, and the President's commitment to restore confidence in America's fiscal management by eliminating wasteful and unnecessary spending.

At the end of the previous administration, 625 million acres of offshore acreage -- certainly worth trillions of dollars -- was bafflingly restricted from development with the stroke of a pen. President Trump acted swiftly to remedy that insanity. We proudly announced that the first lease sale in the appropriately renamed Gulf of America will occur this year -- a move that generates immediate and long-term revenue for the Treasury. With a simple, commonsense offshore commingling policy change we're increasing production of oil in the Gulf of America by 100,000 barrels per day -- which will help reduce the price at the pump for American families. And as we begin to get back into the business of mapping the full extent of the resources within the Federal estate, we recently published a finding showing there is at least 23% more recoverable oil and gas in the Gulf of America than previously known! This number will continue to increase, as new innovations occur.

President Trump made himself very clear via executive order that he wanted to unleash Alaska's energy potential, so we have been busy reviewing and rectifying the mountain of restrictions - including 68 Executive orders from the previous administration - that were designed to restrict resource development in Alaska. Interior plans to reopen up to 82% (19 million+ acres) of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska for leasing and energy development opportunities. We are in the process of reinstating a program that makes the entire 1.56-million-acre Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) available for oil and gas leasing. And we have initiated action along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Corridor and Dalton Highway north of the Yukon River to convey these lands to State of Alaska. These are critical steps for developing the proposed Ambler Road, which would provide access to mineral-rich areas, and the crucial Alaska Liquified Natural Gas Pipeline project.

Americans rejoiced when President Trump formally ended the "War on Coal" that caused great damage to our economy and national security. Beautiful, clean American coal has survived decades of regulatory assault and will play a pivotal role in continuing to power America going forward. Last month, we ended the Obama-era Federal Coal Moratorium and removed layers of red tape that undermined beautiful, clean American coal production on federal lands. We approved the expansion of the Spring Creek Coal Mine in Montana, which has 40 million tons of recoverable resource and directly supports hundreds of American jobs. Clean American coal is a "triple win" for our country because thermal coal provides reliable and affordable baseload electricity, metallurgical coal is foundational for bringing back our steel industry, and the mining and refining of coal that contains critical and rare earth minerals is essential to secure our own domestic supply chains for our defense, transportation, and tech industries which are currently heavily dependent on foreign sources. Moreover, the US Geological Survey recently provided us with an estimate that our coal reserves are worth somewhere around \$8 trillion – which should be counted as a big-time asset on America's Balance Sheet!

Right now, America is in an Artificial Intelligence Arms Race with China. Beijing controls the processing of 85% of critical minerals and is dramatically increasing their coal production and other forms of baseload power. The

Communist Party leadership knows that the A.I. Arms Race will be won by the country with the best technology and most electricity. We hold a slight lead in our AI software, but we are now forced to play catch up on baseload power generation due to the Climate Extremist policies of the prior administration that raised prices, lowered reliability, and contributed to our national debt and deficit. Keeping domestic coal-fired power generation open will help us win this contest, help ensure 24 x 7 x 365 reliability, while also driving down electricity costs for American families even as the demand rises as data centers are built.

The Department is also undertaking efforts to establish our position as the leading producer and processor of critical and rare earth minerals, which will create jobs and prosperity at home, strengthen domestic supply chains for the United States and its allies, and reduce the global influence of adversarial states. We will prioritize America's critical mineral dominance by updating the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) list of critical minerals and continuing the ongoing geological mapping of the country. The Budget will also support programs that support USGS's ability to provide high-level energy and mineral characterizations that will afford greater understanding of the country's expansive resources. On these fronts, we're already making great progress with actions such as approving rare earth mineral exploration at the Colosseum Mine. And as part of our commitment to the "Map, Baby, Map!" surveying ethos, we published a factsheet on deep sea mineral opportunities.

The Budget also saves taxpayers \$80 million by eliminating the Department's "intermittent" energy programs that focus on unaffordable, unreliable energy to the detriment of American consumers, businesses, and communities. This includes eliminating funding that supports offshore wind projects that harm coastal communities, wildlife, and military readiness.

Improve Wildland Firefighting. Preventing and combating wildfires is vitally important to protect people, communities, and the environment. Nearly 65,000 wildfires burned more than 8.9 million acres across the United States last year, endangering communities, critical infrastructure, and local economies. The trend of increasingly extreme and frequent wildfires has continued, with catastrophic fires in Southern California and the Southeast in recent months.

Federal wildfire risk mitigation and suppression responsibilities for wildland fire are currently split across five agencies in two different departments. This current duplicative and ineffective structure defies commonsense. The Budget reforms Federal wildland fire management to create operational efficiencies by consolidating and unifying Federal wildland fire responsibilities into a new centralized Federal Wildland Fire Service at the Department of the Interior. The new unified service will employ all Federal wildland firefighters, procure and sustain Federal wildland fire resources and manage Federal wildland fire response policies. This new service will streamline Federal wildfire suppression response, risk mitigation efforts, and coordination with non-Federal partners to combat the wildfire crisis.

Supporting Tribal Nations. The Department of the Interior upholds the Federal government's unique trust responsibilities by fostering the government-to-government relations between the Federal government and federally recognized Tribes, American Indians, and Alaska Natives. The Budget supports programs at the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education, sustaining the Federal Government's support for the core programs that benefit tribal communities. At the same time, it streamlines programs for tribal communities, to reduce inefficiencies and eliminate funding for programs and activities found to be ineffective. For example, the Budget eliminates the Indian Guaranteed Loan program for tribal business development because it is duplicative of several other programs across the Federal Government that offer loans to small businesses and which tribal businesses are eligible for and receive.

Expanding Outdoor Access. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt gave remarks at the laying of the cornerstone of the Gateway to Yellowstone where he described our National Parks as "great natural playgrounds" that exist for the "benefit and enjoyment" of the American people. Since becoming Interior Secretary, I've traveled to National Parks, historic sites, and wildlife refuges to learn and hear from leadership on the ground. We're instituting changes to get more people actually working in the parks and are looking forward to what Yellowstone Superintendent Cam Sholly forecasted to be an "outstanding summer." We've also attended events for the National Park Foundation, Trust for the National Mall, and met with National Trust for Public Lands leadership to help fortify the public-private partnerships that provide funding to enhance experiences for the hundreds-of-millions of annual visitors.

President Trump knows very well that America's connection with our beautiful public lands is strengthened through expanded access. In a major step to expand recreational access to America's public lands, Interior recently announced 42 new proposed hunting opportunities across more than 87,000 acres within the National Wildlife Refuge System and National Fish Hatchery System. This proposal would more than 3X the number of opportunities and 5X the number of stations opened or expanded compared to the previous administration, underscoring the Trump Administration's strong national commitment to outdoor recreation and conservation. By opening more areas to hunting and outdoor recreation, we're helping drive tourism, create jobs, and generate revenue for local communities, all while promoting responsible stewardship of our natural resources.

Responsible Land Management. When it comes to land management, we are cutting wasteful spending by prioritizing the Administration's goals of federalism.

America needs more affordable housing, and the Federal government can help make that happen by making Federal land available to build affordable housing stock. We created a Joint Task Force on Federal Land for Housing with Secretary Turner and HUD to increase housing supply and decrease costs for millions of Americans.

Under this agreement, HUD will pinpoint areas where housing needs are most pressing and guide the process by working with State and local leaders who know their communities best. Interior will identify locations that can support homes while carefully considering environmental impacts and land-use restrictions. Working together, our agencies will take inventory of underused Federal properties, transfer or lease them to States or localities to address housing needs, and support the infrastructure required to make development viable – all while ensuring affordability remains at the core of the mission.

Reforming the Department. Interior is focused on streamlining our core business operations, which will result in improved efficiencies and lower costs for American taxpayers. The Department has already taken steps to unify many of the Department's business functions within the Office of the Secretary. This unification includes human resources, information resources

and technology management, training and development, civil rights and equal employment opportunity, procurement, Federal financial assistance (grants and cooperative agreements), communications, personnel security, finance, and other similar functions. Further unifying our organization will create significant efficiencies across the Department by optimizing processes, eliminating redundant efforts, and helping streamline technology adoption. Interior will advance innovation, collaboration and solutions that address the pressing challenges of our time.

In closing, this Budget is about putting America first and doing the best for the American taxpayer. As Interior moves forward, these initiatives set the foundation for a renewed focus on responsible resource management, and economic growth. By advancing policies that honor America's heritage while fostering innovation, the Department remains committed to serving the national interests of the American people.

Theodore Roosevelt once said that "far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing." The work we do at Interior makes America more prosperous, beautiful, safe, and strong. Therefore, it is certainly work worth doing!

I appreciate that this Subcommittee has strongly supported the Department's mission, and I look forward to working closely with you to advance the President's priorities.