

Chairman Mike Simpson
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Fiscal Year 2014 Interior and Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill
Full Committee Markup
July 31, 2013

Good morning and welcome to the Full Committee markup of the fiscal year 2014 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies bill.

I want to thank my friend, Mr. Moran, for the spirit of comity that continues to be a hallmark of our subcommittee's deliberations—even in this very challenging budget climate.

The fiscal year 2014 Interior and Environment bill is funded at \$24.278 billion which is \$5.5 billion, or 18.6 percent, below the FY13 enacted level and \$5.7 billion, or 19 percent, below the budget request.

The subcommittee has made very difficult choices in preparing this bill. For years, we've heard people talking about making tough choices on spending. Ladies and gentlemen, this bill makes tough choices on spending.

The Committee recommendation is an illustration of what happens when Congress tries to achieve deficit reduction entirely through reductions in discretionary spending. Significantly reducing our Federal budget deficit and the national debt, however, will not occur until mandatory savings are achieved.

The Committee recommendation makes a clear attempt to delineate the critical “must do” priorities from other priorities in this bill. Funding reductions—and yes, even termination of some programs—are necessary in order to provide critical funding for higher priority human health, public safety, and treaty obligations and responsibilities throughout the bill. Let me give you a few examples:

The Department of the Interior and the Forest Service are dealing with real emergencies when it comes to addressing wildfires across the country, and especially in the West. The inadequate fiscal year 2014 budget request for fire-related accounts virtually guarantees that the cost of wildfire suppression will continue to rise in the future and perpetuates the borrowing of funds from non-fire public lands and national forest priorities, to pay for wildfire suppression.

Last year, fire borrowing exceeded \$450 million. Today, it's projected that fire borrowing in the present fiscal year will be between \$400-800 million. The House tried to address this need in the full-year CR but the Senate—for reasons that I still don't understand—removed this funding.

The Committee has restored cuts in the budget request to the Department of the Interior and Forest Service for hazardous fuels. The Committee has also provided the Forest Service funding

for two next-generation aircraft to efficiently and safely fight wildfire—and replace Korean War era aircraft.

Fire suppression at the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service is fully funded at the 10-year average. The bill also provides an additional \$600 million to the Forest Service to address fire borrowing.

Due to the extraordinary, critical nature of fire suppression requirements; the unforeseen severity of this year's fire season; and the inadequacy of the budget request, fire suppression funds (\$1.566 billion) are provided in FY14 on an emergency basis—and are fully offset.

This bill makes critical investments in Indian Country—an area of strong interest to the bipartisan Members of this subcommittee. Overall, funding for the Indian Health Service is provided at the FY13 post-sequester level. Members on both sides of the aisle agree that sequester is having a negative impact on these health accounts, affecting some of the most vulnerable of our Native American brothers and sisters. We're not able to turn off sequester in our bill but we must work together to carry that message to the Budget Committee.

I'm pleased to report that this bill funds the construction of the three remaining schools on the Bureau of Indian Education's 2004 replacement school construction list—again, a priority shared by the bipartisan Members of this subcommittee.

The operations of our national parks are funded at \$24 million above the post-sequestration level which means every park unit in the country will remain operational and staffed in the coming year.

It's also worth noting that mandatory funding for PILT payments is scheduled to expire at the end of the current fiscal year. PILT payments are made to 49 of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. As of today, much uncertainty remains over whether this authorization will be extended this year. For this reason, the Subcommittee has included bill language extending by one year the mandatory authorization for PILT funding.

To help pay for the most critical funding needs, the bill proposes the termination of funding for land acquisition. I suspect this will change by the time we complete our work later this year. The bill also proposes the termination of funding for the Woodrow Wilson Center, the Office of Navajo and Indian Relocation, and the Eisenhower Commission.

The bill also reduces funding for most of the Title III agencies by 19 percent which is consistent with the overall 19 percent reduction in the subcommittee allocation.

Again this year, there is a great deal of concern over the number of regulatory actions being pursued by agencies in the absence of legislation and without clear congressional direction. This is especially true with the EPA. For this reason, the bill includes a number of provisions to address some of these issues. Overall, funding for the EPA is reduced by \$2.8 billion, or 34 percent, from fiscal year 2013 enacted levels.

This is the beginning of a long process and I hope over the coming months we'll all come together to find common ground. In the meantime, we need to move this bill forward today. By passing this bill today, we'll be in a much better position to negotiate a final bill with the Senate later this year. I strongly urge the Members to support the bill and look forward to continuing to work with Mr. Moran and the Members of the Committee.

Before I close, I want to thank the staff on both sides of the aisle. Darren Benjamin, Jason Gray, Erica Rhoad, Colin Vickery, Jonathan Steele, and Dave LesStrang of the majority staff; Missy Small, Lindsay Slater, and Emilee Henshaw of my staff; and Rick Healy, Shalanda Young, and Tim Aiken of the minority staff.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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