



FROM: Kountoupes Denham Carr & Reid

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RE: Senate Energy and Natural Resources Full Committee Confirmation Hearing to Consider the Nomination of the Honorable Doug Burgum to be Secretary of the Interior

Topline Summary

- The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held its confirmation hearing on Thursday to consider Doug Burgum to be Secretary of Interior. Republicans voiced their support and confidence that he would be confirmed. Democrats also shared sentiments of support, with a few offering their concerns about offshore drilling, and the possible shift away from advancing clean energy sources.
- Throughout the hearing Republicans and Democrats discussed the importance of protecting our public lands, wildlife, and finishing both infrastructure and cleanup projects.

Senators Attending: Senators Attending: Chairman Mike Lee (R-UT), Ranking Member Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Senator John Barrasso (R-WY), Senator James Risch (R-ID), Senator Steve Daines (R-MT), Senator Tom Cotton (R-AR), Senator David McCormick (R-PA), Senator Jim Justice (R-WV), Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Senator John Hoeven (R-ND), Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Senator Angus King (I-ME), Senator Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Senator John Hickenlooper (D-CO), Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA), Senator Ruben Gallego (D-AZ)

[Live Hearing Link](#)

Meeting called to order by Chairman Mike Lee

Opening Statements

Chairman Mike Lee (R-UT): Good morning, and welcome to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. This is a hearing that we're holding today to consider Governor Doug Burgum of North Dakota, to be the Secretary of the Interior. And it's an honor and a privilege to serve in this capacity as Chairman during such a pivotal moment



for our nation, and issues surrounding its energy needs and land management policies. I want to extend a warm welcome to Governor Doug Burgum and to his wife, Catherine, thank you for being here. And thank you both for joining us today. And you will have a chance in a moment to introduce anyone else in the audience who's here with you today that you'd like to Governor Burgum.

Your nomination to lead the Department of the Interior comes at an urgent time as Americans under the policies of the Biden administration are suffering from skyrocketing energy prices that drive up the cost of everything from gas to groceries from housing to health care, to restrictive land use policies that tend to stifle growth generally, the challenges facing American families are mounting, and they're staggering this past November, voters decided to send a clear message.

They demanded bold leaders willing to break from the status quo and take a fresh approach one less likely to result in this awful pattern of inflation in which we found ourselves over the last four years. Your nomination has garnered remarkable support from tribes, from organizations, businesses, and people of all stripes and backgrounds, particularly those who were most uniquely indirectly affected by the US Department of the Interior and its policies. The dozens of letters of support nationwide, further underscore your reputation as a leader, one who's committed to change, committed to fostering relationships, and they reflect pretty widespread confidence in your vision and in your readiness to lead this organization. The Department of the Interior, of course, plays a central role in addressing many of these challenges, particularly in states like Utah, my state, where federal land management shapes nearly every aspect of our day to day life, because well, the federal government owns two thirds of the land about 67% In my state.

And there are other members of this Committee who represent other public land states who understand the relationship between the Department you've been called to lead and their day to day lives. nearly 1/5 of the land in the United States is under the jurisdiction of the US Department of the Interior in my state. It's much higher than that, of course. And this influences everything from energy development to public land access, Tribal Relations and wildlife management.

In Utah, where the federal government controls more than two thirds of the land. The impact of these policies are profound. The decisions made in Washington ripple through our economy and our communities in ways that are unmistakable and not always positive. Unfortunately, these policies have taken a troubling turn during the Biden administration, expanding national monuments like Bears Ears and grand staircase without meaningful input From local communities as jeopardized access and harmed the locals who call these places home.

The public lands rule and restrictive management plans have placed unnecessary and often insurmountable barriers in the way of responsible resource development and land access. On his first day in office, President Biden issued a moratorium on oil and gas leasing,



severely damaging our energy security and locking away resources. We needed to power our homes and our economy. Now, over time, these these decisions have revealed a pattern of disregard for the multiple use mandate that federal land management is supposed to uphold, and to which it's been subjected for nearly 50 years.

The consequences of these policies extend of course, far beyond Utah. As wildfires devastate California it's clear that mismanagement of public lands has consequences that often reach far beyond rural areas. Federal agencies must reevaluate their approach to wildfire prevention, prioritizing forest management strategies that mitigate the risk of catastrophic places. Utah and other western states know to well the devastation that these fires cause.

And addressing this crisis must be a very key priority for the Department. Reversing course, will of course require bold leadership and a willingness to embrace innovative solutions. The Department of the Interior must take a hard look at the leasing restrictions of the last few years which have steered development toward low potential areas while blocking access to high value resources, like critical minerals. These are the building blocks for our economy and our national defense and we can't afford to let bureaucratic delays jeopardize our future.

Housing shortages across the West present another daunting challenge that we have to face. By working with state and local governments to identify underutilized federal lands, the Department could finally, meaningfully alleviate the housing crisis in places like Utah where the demand for affordable homes far exceeds supply. bills like my houses Act would provide a long, long term strategy and a strong framework for such partnerships, showing that Federal Land Policy can drive solutions rather than creating obstacles. The Colorado River lifeline for millions across the West faces growing threats, effective communication and support from the Department of the Interior.

As states negotiate the rivers future will be critical to safeguarding that vital resource. Our national parks also require renewed attention. These iconic landscapes are a source of pride and major economic driver for the gateway communities surrounding them. According to some polls, they're one of the few features of the federal government that people actually like so we've got to take care of them.

The Department must work to balance accessibility with conservation, ensuring that visitors can enjoy these treasures without compromising the future. This will require stronger partnerships with local stakeholders to address infrastructure needs, and manage visitor impacts. On the regulatory front, the misuse of the Endangered Species Act has caused significant harm by halting development projects and undermining state authority. While the ESA is an essential tool for protecting imperiled species.

It must be applied judiciously and in coordination with local governments to avoid unnecessary conflict. Governor Burgum your track record uniquely positions you in



particular to lead the Department of the Interior. During this challenging time, your vision and your leadership will be instrumental to restoring the restoring balance to federal policies and ensuring that public lands are managed with accountability and with care. Utah stands ready to work with you in tackling these challenges and charting a new course that reflects the principles of federalism and respect for local communities. Utah stands ready to work with you in tackling these challenges and charting a new course and I invite you to invite you to visit Utah as soon as you have the chance to see firsthand the opportunities and the challenges we face. The hearing that we're having today marks the beginning of an essential conversation about the future of the Department of the Interior. And I look forward to hearing your perspective and exploring ways that we can work together to address these pressing issues. Thanks again for your willingness to serve and really look forward to our discussions today.

Ranking Member Martine Heinrich (D-NM): Thank you, Chairman and Governor Burgum. Welcome to the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Have. We had a great conversation last week.

I'm very much looking forward to hearing your answers to the questions today. And I want to I too want to begin by acknowledging the horrific wildfires in California over the last couple of weeks. And having spoken to many of my members on the Dyess I know you're gonna get some, some questions about that, and in particular about firefighters and how we make sure that they are supported. The Department of Interior has responsibility for an incredibly broad array of issues, from conserving the places that Americans love to spend time with their families, to protecting and recovering our most iconic wildlife species, to delivering water to cities and farms across the West, and fulfilling our nation's trust responsibility.

Responsibilities to tribal nations. Pretty much any job that involves responsibilities that range from elementary school students and health care to bison is a pretty big job. Public Lands are there where we go to camp and hike and hunt and fish and spend time with our families. They're where our veterans go to seek the peace and solitude that their service to our country could not always provide.

And while there are some who argued that the very existence of public lands, places like Yosemite or the Bitterroot National Forest, are unconstitutional, but most Americans know that the idea of lands that belong to everyone, no matter where they live, or who their parents are, how thick or thin their wallet is, is one of the most democratic ideas from our nation. I hope you'll join me and keeping public lands in public hands. And the Interior Department is also the leader in meeting our nation's trust responsibility to tribal nations, and upholding the treaty commitments that we as a nation made to tribes and their members. As a nation, as we discussed in my office, we routinely fall short of meeting those commitments, we can and we must do better.



As the relentless pace of climate change brings bigger floods, hotter summers, higher winds, as we've seen in California, and diminish snowpack which we are experiencing in New Mexico, it's also driving the long term ratification of the western United States. Over the next 50 years, it's expected that New Mexico will have 25% less water than we have had historically. And we're not alone in that. The Colorado River which provides drinking water for 40 million people irrigates billions of dollars worth of crops, provides essential habitat for fish and wildlife, and will likely never return to those early 20th century flows that we used to be able to expect.

Through the Bureau of Reclamation, the Department of the Interior must play an active role in helping the West transition to that new water reality. And as you know, the Interior Department is also an energy Department. As we make the transition to a cleaner energy economy, the Land and Water managed by the Department will play an indispensable role in producing the energy that we need, as well as facilitating the ability to move that energy around the country, from geothermal and hydrogen to solar and wind. The department's work is at the center of our energy future.

Gov. I very much look forward to hearing your plans on all of these topics and more. And I think we'll have some very active questions from all of our members today.

Witnesses

Doug Burgum, Nominee to be Secretary of the Interior
Testimony

Q&A

Chairman Mike Lee (R-UT) started by talking about the antiquities act, which allows presidents to place protections on national monuments. He added that monuments were placed during the Clinton and Obama admin where to large, Trump shrank the size, and Biden made the land restrictions larger again exceeding the scope of the law. Chairman Lee asked Mr. Burgum if he will work with him shrink the size and make sure monuments don't exceed the scope of the antiquities act. Mr. Burgum said agreed with his understanding and emphasized that the law says it may only protect the smallest amount of land necessary. He added that a state like Utah that has over 60% of its land open for public use, large expansion of monuments places unnecessary stress on tribes and overall use of the land. Chairman Lee stated that there is an acute housing shortage in the west, and federal land exacerbates the housing crisis. Chairman Lee asked Mr. Burgum how the DOI can help areas inhibited by federal lands. Mr. Burgum said one of the great challenges of our nation is the housing crisis. He added that land swaps could provide opportunities that benefit both parties, the national parks must be protected but there are opportunities for mixed use especially in states like Utah.

Ranking Member Martin Heinrich (D-NM) asked Mr. Burgum to speak to the worry of divesting from the country's public lands in a wholesale fashion, while still promoting our



conservation value. Mr. Burgum said New Mexico is a perfect example of being able to strike a balance between economic expansion and conservation. Ranking Member Heinrich noted the pride New Mexico feels on striking that balance and being able to create new monuments in their state that have support of local leaders and association groups. Ranking Member Heinrich asked that Mr. Burgum meet with himself and local leaders before making any wholesale changes. Mr. Burgum said he would have those meetings, he noted that there have been past experiences where no local leaders, tribes, or association groups have been met with, which is problematic, and consultation is key. Ranking Member Heinrich talked about the passage of the EXPLORER Act, highlighting the outdoor recreation aspect of the law. Ranking Member Heinrich asked Mr. Burgum how they can support outdoor recreation. Mr. Burgum said this is a very important topic to him as an avid outdoorsman and was proud to get the full endorsement of the outdoor recreation roundtable. He added that as Governor of North Dakota they created an office of outdoor recreation, which invested in fishing and hunting access on public lands, created an app that give easy understandable access of what lands are posted for hunters.

Sen. Steve Daines (R-MT) noted the support which Mr. Burgum has earned from nationally recognized tribes. Sen. Daines then discussed the recovery efforts around grizzly bears in Montana and noted a recent decision by Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service to not delist the greater Yellowstone and Continental Divide grizzly bear populations. Sen. Daines argued that this decision punishes the efforts made by his state to save the grizzly bear, noting that livestock and individuals have increasingly been attacked by the species. Sen. Daines argued that the FWS continues to move the goal posts and refuses to move recovered species to state management where they belong. Sen. Daines asked if Mr. Burgum would commit to working with Montana to delist these grizzly species from the endangered species list. Mr. Burgum agreed and noted that states do an ample job at managing populations once they are delisted. Sen. Daines then discussed permitting for coal mining in Montana, claiming that the Biden administration has delayed these reviews. Sen. Daines asked Mr. Burgum if he would prioritize reviewing these permits if confirmed. Mr. Burgum argued that the U.S. is facing an electricity and baseload shortage, suggesting that clean coal could serve as a potential solution. Mr. Burgum said his office would certainly look to work with Sen. Daines office. Sen. Daines ended by highlighting he and Sen. King's efforts to reauthorize the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund. Mr. Burgum expressed his interest in helping Sen. Daines and Sen. King in their efforts.

Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-HI) asked Mr. Burgum if he had ever committed verbal or physical harassment. She also asked if he had ever entered into a settlement revolving around any of these actions. Mr. Burgum said no. Sen. Hirono then noted President-elect Trump's stated intentions of expanding oil and gas production, which she noted greatly contributes to climate change. Sen. Hirono added that climate change not only impacts the environment but political stability throughout the world as well. She asked Mr. Burgum if he was aware that past DOD Secretary's have testified that climate change could lead to greater conflict and war. Mr. Burgum said he was not aware of this testimony but highlighted that



technologies to limit emissions, such as carbon capture, have developed significantly. Sen. Hirono then discussed the Department of Interior's role in protecting the United States' natural resources and heritage. Sen. Hirono asked if Mr. Burgum would refuse to carry out requests by the President that would conflict with the Department's duties, such as approving drilling in Bear Ears National Monument. Mr. Burgum said he would follow the law and Constitution but indicated that he had not read anything along those lines. Sen. Hirono then discussed the Marshall Islands and asked Mr. Burgum if he would reenact their Compact and Free Association. Mr. Burgum said yes and noted that, given China's increasingly aggressive actions, it is as important as ever that the U.S. supports these islands.

Sen. Jim Justice (R-WV) stated that the world is starving for the US to lead the way in energy, which is a sentiment he believes is shared between himself and Mr. Burgum. He added that Permitting has become out of control, while saying that it is important to be fair to the environment and wildlife. Sen. Justice asked Mr. Burgum to explain his approach towards a balance between fish and wildlife and energy. Mr. Burgum said he understands that we are in an energy crisis and need electricity for the AI arm race. He added that permitting queue in FERC for electricity can take 7 years or longer, he said the queue is 95% intermittent sources and only 5% baseload. He continued that we need more baseload and need to find the balance between the two to solve the energy crisis, while still reaching our climate goals. Sen. Justice said there is an attack against hunters, and stated hunters add so much to our country. Sen. Justice asked Mr. Burgum what he will do to protect hunters, to pass it along to the younger generations. Mr. Burgum said he has taken steps to create youth hunting opportunities. He added that many conservation associations pour millions of dollars into conservation, and you can't separate the love of hunting for the love of outdoors and protecting wildlife, and our public lands.

Sen. Angus King (I-ME) highlighted that Mr. Burgum has achieved an all-around energy portfolio, with 36% of his state's power coming from wind power. Sen. King asked Mr. Burgum if he will work with President Trump on protecting wind power. Mr. Burgum noted that Maine has great capabilities for wind power, but not every state is lucky enough for that fortune. He added that the key is piece of baseload versus intermittent and that we have leaned too far one way. He continued that he does recognize what wind power can add but right now we the focus is on striking a balance between baseload and intermittent sources. Sen. King highlighted that current wind projects in the Gulf of Maine can generate enough energy to power all the homes of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Sen. King asked Mr. Burgum if he will commit to keeping the projects in Maine that have already started. Mr. Burgum said he is not familiar with every project under the DOI, but he will review them and if they make sense and are already underway, they will continue. He added that President Trump has been very clear about his concerns about all the tax incentives that have gone to certain types of energy that have created the imbalance we see today. Sen. King asked Mr. Burgum if he appreciates the difficulty of transmission assets particularly in the west. Mr. Burgum said he believes it is one of the great challenges of our time, whether it be an oil pipeline or transmission line, they take too long in our country.



Sen. King noted the backlog of maintenance in the national parks and public lands, and that the DOI has underfunded maintenance, which requires the states to fix a backlog which should have never existed. Sen. King asked if he would ensure that maintenance is properly funded. Mr. Burgum said he was shocked to find that North Dakota did not have a proper formula to get funding for maintenance. He added that we need to fix the formula to make sure the deferred maintenance is taken care of.

Sen. David McCormick (R-PA) discussed his plans to organize an energy innovation summit. Mr. Burgum highlighted Pennsylvania's importance to the United States domestic energy supply, specifically in producing natural gas. Sen. McCormick noted that PA is the country's second largest LNG producer but noted that many Americans lack access to this form of energy. He asked Mr. Burgum how he would work to increase natural gas production and create export terminals. Mr. Burgum said he hoped the coming administration would create an energy counsel but agreed that many Americans lack access. He argued that LNG access and ample pipeline infrastructure is a matter of national security. Sen. McCormick expressed concern that regulations are hindering PA's ability to plug orphan wells throughout the state. He asked Mr. Burgum if he would partner with PA to streamline these requirements so these projects can receive the funding they need. Mr. Burgum noted that each state is struggling with this issue and argued that the technology exists to clean these wells up, emphasizing that they pose environmental risks.

Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) discussed public lands in Nevada and noted the importance of federal-state partnerships in spurring economic development. Sen. Cortez Masto expressed hope that Mr. Burgum would work with her state. Mr. Burgum said he would. Sen. Cortez Masto then discussed baseload and emphasized the importance of public-private partnerships in developing clean energy. She noted that the IRA and Infrastructure bills helped increase jobs and improve national security through the facilitation of greater mining capabilities, battery production, and energy development such as solar. Sen. Cortez Masto asked Mr. Burgum if the combination of renewables and batteries could be considered baseload. Mr. Burgum said this is the future of baseload and emphasized that the combination is still important due to the lack of storage capacity currently. Sen. Cortez Masto expressed concern with the potential for the incoming administration to shift incentives away from renewable to fossil fuels, thus threatening that very baseload. Mr. Burgum said that baseload is key to affordability and argued that the current balance needs reassessment as costs have increased. Sen. Cortez Masto asked if Mr. Burgum supports repealing EV credits. Mr. Burgum said he supports economics and markets, highlighting carbon sequestration as another alternative.

Sen. John Hoeven (R-ND) asked Mr. Burgum if he supports multiple uses for our public lands. Mr. Burgum said yes, and to the aspects of BLM it is essential to local economies whether it be grazing rights, recreation, timber, or oil and gas, multi-use supports local economies and our country. He added that during a presidential cycle Americans are hammered with the fact that we are \$36 trillion in debt, but nobody talks about the assets. He continued that the DOI manages 500 million acres but is restricting the use which could



be worth trillions. Sen. Hoeven stated that it is about working with everyone in multi-use land including the Indian lands. Mr. Burgum said one of the greatest energy tribes in our nation is in North Dakota and stated that one of the hardest jobs, more than governor, and a senator is being a tribal chairman because of the added bureaucracy. He continued that the government tells the tribes that they are doing too much flaring while also not providing the permits for them to build gas lines. Sen. Hoeven asked Mr. Burgum how as part of the National Energy Council he and President Trump plan to assert energy dominance. Mr. Burgum said the intention of the council is to cut red tape, make it more affordable for Americans and sell it to our friends and allies. He added that the AI battle is going to happen during President Trump's term, having the ability to generate intelligence is going to be key; as China has been permitting two coal plants a week to begin the year. He continued that cutting US energy production is a false trade off in making the global environment cleaner as other countries are producing more and much less clean energy.

Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA) noted that as secretary he will be the steward of 20% of the land in America, to which outdoor recreation contributes \$1.2 trillion of economic output per year and accounts for 5 million jobs. Sen. Cantwell asked Mr. Burgum if he would support more input in outdoor recreation economies and the LWCF along with other conservation laws. Mr. Burgum agree completely with the comments made and added that it's not only good for the economy but good for the health of Americans. He continued that it is important for people to get off their phones and go outdoors, and during a time of mental health and addiction crisis, reconnecting with the outdoors can be beneficial. Sen. Cantwell noted that Mr. Burgum is largely in favor of an aggressive oil and gas leasing program. Sen. Cantwell asked Mr. Burgum what he thought about starting with the currently land available for lease that isn't being used currently. Mr. Burgum said he does not recall using the world aggressively, but he is for following the law. He added that the quarterly lease sale had not been happening, even having to file a lawsuit against the government to restart the lease sales. He continued that it is important to prioritize the areas that have the most resource opportunities while having the least impact on the land. Sen. Cantwell reiterated her question and asked Mr. Burgum if he would prioritize already existing lease land that isn't being used as that would be the most efficient. Mr. Burgum said he would have to review before making an affirmative statement but added that from what he's seen is that we are restricting legal access for the development of public land. Sen. Cantwell asked if he believes in real tribal consultation, that being more than a singular phone call. Mr. Burgum said his version of tribal consultation as governor was going to the tribes and listening, sometimes for hours just to truly understand the issues. He added they achieved MOUs on law enforcement and expanding the reach of BIA agents. He continued that some tribal land has become harbors for criminal organizations, due to the lack of resources.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) discussed federal lands and noted the outsized role that the Secretary of the Interior plays for Alaska due to the amount of federally owned land there. Sen. Murkowski said her state must coordinate with Interior on almost everything and expressed hope with Mr. Burgum's future tenure as the Secretary. Sen. Murkowski then



discussed the vast amount of resources and assets in Alaska which often go un-surveyed and unassessed. She next noted that the Biden administration announced last week that they would not be finishing their revised incidental take regulations for north slope activities. Sen. Murkowski explained that leaving these as unfinished business leaves the north slope out to dry and asked Mr. Burgum for his commitment in taking the ITR's back up. Mr. Burgum said he would and argued that Alaska is one of the biggest resources the United States has. Sen. Murkowski alerted Mr. Burgum that the natural gas resources in Alaska are running out and added that the state is looking to build an LNG import terminal to receive natural gas from Canada. She highlighted that Alaska has the necessary reserves and argued that the state must have expanded abilities to access them.

Sen. Alex Padilla (D-CA) discussed the LA wildfires and noted the extent of their destruction. Sen. Padilla noted Mr. Burgum's own experience in dealing with wildfires and asked if federal aid should come with or without conditions attached. Mr. Burgum said it depends on the situation and provided his condolences to the people of California. Sen. Padilla stated that there have never been conditions attached to disaster relief and asked if Mr. Burgum would commit to responding to each and every disaster no matter what state it occurred in. Mr. Burgum said that solutions need to be explored to ensure these don't occur again and are prevented. He added that the energy grid should be looked at as well as sparks resulting from old power lines and elsewhere can lead to fires. Sen. Padilla ended by discussing his efforts to increase pay for federal firefighters and added that hundreds of these firefighters are helping in LA. Sen. Padilla asked if Mr. Burgum would support federal fire fighters as Secretary. Mr. Burgum noted how difficult fire fighting is and argued that there needs to be improved responses to rural and urban fires.

Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA) stated that one of his top priorities is to use federal-state revenue sharing to rebuild the Louisiana shoreline. Sen. Cassidy asked Mr. Burgum if he could speak to the benefits revenue sharing has had on North Dakota. Mr. Burgum said it goes two ways; one portion goes back to the state and the other portion goes to the federal treasury. Those funds whether they are used on-shore or off-shore is of great benefit to conservation, in North Dakota said the money they get is used for education, healthcare, roads. Sen. Cassidy asked if it acts as an additional benefit program for middle and lower economic classes. Mr. Burgum said when it does effectively and appropriately it also lowers the burden of sales tax and property tax. Sen. Cassidy asked Mr. Burgum if he can commit to ensuring lease sales happen when lease sales are scheduled to happen. Mr. Burgum said as a member of the lawsuit trying to get the government to hold the lease sales, he will make sure to follow the law as its written for lease sales. Sen. Cassidy stated that he is interested in working on a bipartisan program to cap the abandoned oil and gas wells. Sen. Cassidy asked Mr. Burgum for his thoughts on such a program. Mr. Burgum said they took some of the revenues coming in from the oil and gas tax and created an abandoned well reclamation fund, they have also made sure that the private sector is doing their share. Sen. Cassidy notes that he has heard from his private sector they are worried to participate in capping the well in fear of being sued if something were to go wrong. Sen. Cassidy asked Mr. Burgum how they handled their private sector in North Dakota. Mr. Burgum said they



worked to incentivize the private sector into willingly participating instead of fearing to participate. He added that it took collaboration, if they were not willing to invest, and help with the development on the frontend, North Dakota would not have been able to use the revenues to help on the backend. Sen. Cassidy stated that he is concerned about China not following environmental regulations allowing them to decrease the cost of manufacturing, which leads to jobs in America being lost to China all while their pollution travels to the United States west coast. He added that he is planning to introduce a foreign pollution fee. Sen. Cassidy asked Mr. Burgum for any comment. Mr. Burgum said he is spot on, and President Trump's guiding principle is reciprocity with tariffs, if you aren't being fair allowing access in your markets or not working as hard to cut emissions than you should have to pay for that.

Sen. John Hickenlooper (D-CO) asked Mr. Burgum as Secretary how do you think you could use your authority to advance rules that boost innovation. Mr. Burgum said he loves the focus on innovation, but when it goes through federal regulation it takes 6-8 years to finalize a rule, while in that same time frame companies have been innovating and are able to solve the problem while promoting and creating new energy sources. He added its why he supports innovation over regulation. Sen. Hickenlooper noted all the discussions currently happening about tariffs on critical minerals. Sen. Hickenlooper asked Mr. Burgum what he would do to help secure the supply chain of critical minerals with our allies. Mr. Burgum said the key word is allies, and needing to secure our network of nations that are truly our allies. He added that in the last 20 years there has been a shift from younger people wanting to study geology and that must be brought back because we are going to be leaders in mining and doing it in a way that creates less pollution. Sen, Hickenlooper offered an invitation to Mr. Burgum to come explore local land alongside the ranchers that many agree needs to be protected. Mr. Burgum accepted the invitation and looks forward to it.

Sen. James Risch (R-ID) also discussed federal lands and echoed earlier comments about Interior's important role as a partner. Sen. Risch said one of the most important decisions Mr. Burgum will have in the future is selecting a new BLM and criticized the choice by the Biden administration. He urged Mr. Burgum to be deliberate in his selection for this role. Sen. Risch then discussed a local windmill project and said Idaho does not want new windmills. Sen. Risch noted that the project will likely end once the Biden administration ends. Sen. Risch then ended by emphasizing the importance of nuclear energy. Sen. Risch discussed SMR and argued that these reactors are the future and will help improve the United States' baseload energy. He expressed appreciation for Mr. Burgum's comments on this energy source.

Sen. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ) discussed the Colorado river and noted that rules around the reduction of the Colorado river expire in 2026. Sen. Gallego noted that there have been proposals to spread the risk of river management between states and asked Mr. Burgum if he would help facilitate these proposals. Mr. Burgum noted the importance of the Colorado River as a resource and noted his appreciation for this issue. Sen. Gallego then discussed



the lack of resources that tribal law enforcement have and asked Mr. Burgum how he would plan to help improve this service. Mr. Burgum noted that organized crime occurs within these gaps and argued that there needs to be more staffing and recruiting. He noted that the number of open cases involving missing indigenous women is a tragedy and argued that there needs to be an entirely new approach. Sen. Gallego then discussed the Glenn Canyon Dam, which he noted has some design flaws preventing it from passing water through to lower basins. He asked Mr. Burgum how he would prioritize this issue. Mr. Burgum said he was not aware of these issues but indicated that he would work diligently to look into it if confirmed.

Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS) asked Mr. Burgum to visit and commit to enhancing the two historical park sites. Mr. Burgum said it is wonderful having a senator who was raised and engaged in agriculture. He added that we have huge, deferred maintenance. problem with a big opportunity to fix it. He Continued that that we must take care of these sites and making sure they can handle all the visitors as it is essential to the local economy. Sen, Hyde-Smith stated that an offshore drilling will soon go online and produce 75,000 barrels a day. She added that it is important that the lease sale stays on time to ensure proper use and energy production. Sen. Hyde-Smith asked if he believed the current 5-year plan with 3 lease schedules, enough to meet our current energy demands, and if not, will he work to create a new 5-year plan. Mr. Burgum said offshore drilling has very long lead times, and due to the unpredictable nature of lease sales under the Biden administration and the drop in lease sales almost guarantees we would see a decline in energy production in the years ahead. He added that getting lease sales to be regular, predictable, and at a level to maintain energy production is minimum standard for us.

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) stated how strongly he feels about the clean energy tax credits, the more you reduce carbon the more your tax savings are. Sen. Wyden asked Mr. Burgum to explain his skepticisms from their earlier conversation. Mr. Burgum said he believes Sen. Wyden's principles are very sound; he stated that his credits may have been so successful that we now have a serious imbalance in between baseload and intermittent energy producers. He added that if there is innovation neutrality, in North Dakota they are creating carbon-negative barrels of oil, carbon-neutral biofuels. He continued that we have an opportunity for innovation lane, and we need it all if we are going to win the energy battle. Sen. Wyden said he is going to take it that he can count on Mr. Burgum working with him and the committee. Mr. Burgen said he will be he will remain anchored in National Security – ensuring we are not dependent on foreign nations like China, and the economy and affordability.

Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY) discussed the federal government's ownership of hundreds of thousands of acres of western land, arguing that the Biden administration has failed to coordinate adequately with local and state management officials. Sen. Barrasso specifically highlighted a finalized Biden administration resource management plan which he argued would lock up local access to land and has been appealed by the Governor of Wyoming. Sen. Barrasso asked Mr. Burgum would commit to working with Wyoming to undo this plan. Mr.



Burgum noted that North Dakota experienced a similar plan and committed to working with the state. Sen. Barrasso then highlighted that a significant amount of mineral capacity in Wyoming is owned by the federal government. He highlighted the importance of coordination between his state and Interior on this front, asking Mr. Burgum to commit to working with state officials on accessing these reserves. Sen. Barrasso then discussed an RMP which would ban new coal leasing and asked if Mr. Burgum would commit to reversing this plan. Mr. Burgum said yes and noted that the Powdered River contains many critical minerals as well. Sen. Barrasso criticized the Biden administrations handling of oil and gas lease management and asked if Mr. Burgum would work to quickly provide these leases. Mr. Burgum said yes. Sen. Barrasso then asked Mr. Burgum if he would support multi-use on federal lands. Mr. Burgum said yes.

Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR) discussed the Endangered Species Act and specifically noted the case of the Snail Darter which was a made-up fish used to delay the development of a dam. Sen. Cotton claimed that this is a fairly common practice used by conservationist to obstruct construction projects. Sen. Cotton asked Mr. Burgum if he would commit to reviewing Endangered Species Act designations to ensure there aren't similar cases. Mr. Burgum said that this is an important issue and argued that these practices weaponize federal rules meant to protect species. He said he would commit to this.

Chairman Lee noted that public lands act as massive asset but do not have clear financial evaluation. Chairman Lee asked Mr. Burgum what steps he would take to improve transparency and ensure federal land evaluations reflect their value to the American people. Mr. Burgum said there is a lot of enthusiasm about the American balance sheet, having had conversations with the Treasury nominee, Commerce nominee and Speaker Johnson. He added that it is important to make sure we get a return on a balance for the American people, and reminded everyone that we can develop and produce energy much cleaner than everyone else. He continued that many people view not going through with lease sales as a costless event, but the tradeoff could be trillions of dollars that was taken away from future generations and it's important that the American people know that.

Ranking Member Heinrich asked if Mr. Burgum if his approach in his recovering American wildlife act is something he can help them with. Mr. Burgum said the people who work in Game & Fish at the state level are those who care the most and returning it back to states is the best way to approach it. Ranking Member Heinrich asked Mr. Burgum if he will commit to resolving legal claims to tribal water settlements. Mr. Burgum gave his commitment.

Sen. King associated himself with the comments made by the Chair around assessing the value of the totality of American resources. Sen. King then discussed the need for adequate maintenance budgets in achieving this valuation. Sen. King then asked Mr. Burgum if he believes climate change is a threat. Mr. Burgum said yes he believes climate change is a global phenomenon. Sen. King mentioned Mr. Burgum's efforts to achieve carbon neutrality in North Dakota but expressed concern with Mr. Burgum's comments on intermittent



energy and baseload. He asked Mr. Burgum if he agrees that renewable energy can be developed if it can be integrated into the grid in a safe and reliable way. Mr. Burgum said yes and clarified that he only differentiated between the two because the current grid is not adequate to achieve the baseload which is needed currently. Sen. King worried that baseload would become code for no renewables. Mr. Burgum said he does not believe baseload should exclude renewables but reiterated that their capacity for providing power is currently limited to intermittent. Sen. King emphasized the need to develop greater energy storage for renewables to achieve baseload and asked if Mr. Burgum agrees. Mr. Burgum said yes but noted the associated costs with creating this form of storage. Mr. Burgum argued in favor of an all-of-the-above approach if it provides more affordable energy. Sen. King emphasized the need to continue innovating and argued that renewable energies are becoming increasingly affordable, including storage. Mr. Burgum noted that batteries only improve around 2% each year and questioned the potential for greater innovation in the short term.

Sen. Hickenlooper discussed the Western Governors association and asked if they still meet with the Secretary of the Interior. Mr. Burgum said they typically do on an annual basis and would welcome the opportunity to meet with them as Secretary. Sen. Hickenlooper then discussed the Colorado River and noted the 25 year drought it is currently experiencing. Sen. Hickenlooper lauded Mr. Burgum's irrigation plan in North Dakota and argued that it could serve as a strong model for the Department. Sen. Hickenlooper asked Mr. Burgum to discuss this work and how he would look to help manage water basins experiencing drought. Mr. Burgum argued that, with smart planning and collaboration, projects to protect water basins and facilitate greater resourcing can be completed quickly and effectively. Sen. Hickenlooper stated that the Bureau of Reclamation has initiated a lot of work in Colorado and expressed hope that the funds committed to these projects will be protected. Mr. Burgum agreed that providing a predictable stream of capital is extremely important.

Sen. Hoeven stated that he worked to pass legislation to get horses in the Theodore Roosevelt national park and asked Mr. Burgum if he would work with him to keep those horses. Mr. Burgum said he would continue working with him and the national park.

Chairman Mike Lee brought the hearing to a close.