

**United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
Oversight Hearing on Indian Energy Development
"Regaining Self-Determination Over Reservation Resources"
May 1, 2008**

**Testimony of Chairman Carl Venne
Crow Nation**

I. Introduction

Good morning. On behalf of the Crow Nation, I want to thank Chairman Dorgan and the members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs for holding this Oversight Hearing on Indian Energy Development. My name is Carl Venne and I am the Chairman of the Crow Nation. I appreciate this invitation to provide testimony from the Crow Nation's perspective on energy development, an area central to my administration and a topic that has unlimited potential to improve the ongoing substandard socioeconomic conditions of the Crow people and the surrounding communities in southeastern Montana.

During my administration over the past six years, with the help of many partners and allies, we have taken several meaningful steps toward the successful development of our energy resources and look forward to completing, in the next few years, projects that will transform my community. My purpose today is to provide a brief history of these efforts and to share some of our understanding of what further work is necessary for tribal energy development.

II. Brief Overview of Crow Reservation and Resources

A. Brief History of Land and Population

The Crow Nation is a sovereign government located in southeastern Montana. The Crow Nation has three formal treaties with the federal government, concluding with the Fort Laramie Treaty of May 7, 1868. The Crow Reservation originally encompassed most of Wyoming (including the Powder River Basin) and southeastern Montana. Through a series of treaties, agreements and unilateral federal laws over a 70 year span, Crow territory was reduced by 92% to its current 2.2 million acre area.

In addition to substantial land loss, the remaining tribal land base within the exterior boundary of the Crow Reservation was carved up by the 1920 Crow Allotment Act. In 1919, prior to the Allotment Act, there were already 2,453 allotments, consisting of 482,584 acres. By 1935, there were 5,507 allotments, consisting of 2,054,055 acres (218,136 acres were alienated by 1935). The Big Horn and Pryor Mountains were not allotted and still remain reserved for the Crow Nation and its citizens.

A unique provision of the 1920 Act, Section 2, remains a serious problem. According to this provision, the Secretary of the Interior was not to approve a conveyance of land to a person, company or corporation who already owned at least 640 acres of agricultural or 1,280 acres of grazing land within the Crow Reservation. Further, the Secretary of the Interior was not to

approve a conveyance of land to a person, company or corporation that, with the conveyance, would own more than 1,280 acres of agricultural or 1,920 acres of grazing land. A conveyance of Crow land exceeding these restrictions was considered void and the grantee was guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by a \$5,000 fine and/or 6 months in jail. Federal enforcement of this statute has been non-existent, and today, approximately one third of the acreage of the Reservation is owned in violation of the 1920 Allotment Act.

At the same time as the Crow land base was being unilaterally reduced, the number of Crow citizens also dwindled dramatically. In fact, according to the Annual Reports of the Commission of Indian Affairs, the Crow population decreased by fifty percent (50%) in 30 years. In 1880, the U.S. Census estimated the Crow population to be approximately 3,400 and in 1910, that number was about 1,700. A number of factors caused the rapid population decline: tuberculosis; poor sanitation; crowded living conditions; severe weather; and epidemics of other infectious diseases. At that time, others arguing for more complete “opening” of the Crow Reservation argued that the statistics showed that within a few years the Tribe would be eradicated and would have no more need for its lands. Perhaps you can imagine the effects of such rhetoric on people struggling to survive.

B. Present Land and Population

As recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Montana v. U.S.*, 450 U.S. 544, 548 (1981), the statistical land ownership resulting from the above described legal history was: 52% Crow allotments; 17% Crow Nation trust land; 28% non-Indian fee land; 2% State of Montana fee land; and 1% federal government land. According to more recent Bureau of Land Management Reports, the land statistics have shifted: 45% Crow allotments; 20% Crow Nation trust land; and 35% non-Indian fee land. In sum, the pattern of surface ownership generally is “checkerboard” with interspersed Crow Nation trust and fee lands, Crow allotments and non-Indian fee lands. The statistics show limited success of the Crow Nation in reacquiring lost lands, but the reality is a much larger pattern of continued loss.

Today, there are about 12,000 enrolled citizens of the Crow Nation, with approximately 8,000 of those residing within the exterior boundaries of the Reservation. Our goal is to invite more of our citizens to return home to live and resume tribal relations, but we must be able to offer them homes, jobs, and a place to find their dreams. Our current unemployment rate is 47%. The Crow Nation has always emphasized higher education and we currently have more than 400 annual applications for higher education assistance. Because of federal funding limitations and internal budget constraints, however, we can only fund 90 students each year.

In addition to providing financial support for education, we have a separately chartered tribal college (Little Bighorn College, “LBHC”) that started operations in 1981. LBHC has had over 300 graduates. LBHC graduates are employed on and around the Crow Reservation in a variety of positions including teachers' aids, computer technicians, office managers and administrative assistants. At least sixty have completed bachelor's degrees and are pursuing professions in education, social work, human services, science, nursing, technology, accounting and business. As we move forward in developing our energy resources, our own college can help to provide our citizens with training in new fields for new job opportunities.

C. Minerals, Past and Present

The Crow Nation has an opportunity to develop tribal resources because a minority of important legislation allowed for the protection of significant amounts of mineral rights by the Tribe. The 1920 Crow Allotment Act reserved all minerals, oil and gas on any allotted lands for the benefit of the entire tribe. However, after 50 years, unless otherwise ordered by Congress, the minerals would automatically become the property of the Crow allottee (or heir). In addition, the Allotment Act also stated that any mining leases could not exceed 10 years; but the lessee had a first right of renewal.

In 1968, Congress extended the time period in perpetuity for the minerals to be held and reserved for the Crow Nation. Today, the Crow Reservation contains 2,034,746 acres in subsurface mineral rights. Ownership of the subsurface mineral acres is not entirely clear but it is estimated to be owned primarily by the Crow Nation, with some allotted and non-Indian fee ownership. The significant natural resources within the reservation boundaries are recognized but remain largely untapped.

The Crow Nation has developed a limited amount of its resources, typically with royalty (and some tax) revenue received as the lessor. Even though we had some oil and gas development between the 1920s and 1950s, most of our governmental revenue is derived from our 35-year relationship with Westmoreland Resources, Inc. Over that period, the Apsaalooke mine has produced about 150 millions tons of coal and is the largest private employer within the Crow Reservation.

The Crow Nation has very substantial undeveloped mineral resources. It is estimated that we own 3% of the world's coal resource, exceeding 10 billion tons. We have been exploring our oil and gas reserves, and preliminary estimates believe them to be significant. In addition, we have large deposits of industrial minerals, such as limestone and bentonite. Finally, preliminary data suggests that we have class 5 / 6 wind energy as well as other renewable resources.

III. My Administration's Vision on Energy Development

Given our vast mineral resources, the Crow Nation can, and should, be self-sufficient. My goal is clear. My administration desires to develop our mineral resources in an economically sound, environmentally responsible manner that is consistent with Crow culture and beliefs. The Crow people are tired of saying that we are resource rich and cash poor.

My larger vision is to become America's energy partner and help reduce America's dependence on foreign oil. Over the next 40 years, the World Energy Council predicts that the world will need to double today's level of energy supply to meet increased demand. Primary energy sources, such as coal, oil and gas, have a finite life and the future must have renewable energy, new technology to make existing producers more efficient and environmentally sound, and an overall reduction in people's per capita use of energy.

My administration stands ready to meet the global energy challenge and take the risks necessary to meet short-term demand. With a substantial Crow coal resource, perhaps the Crow government can build the first coal-to-liquids plant in North America with capture and storage of carbon. If so, then I can contract with the U.S. Air Force to supply clean diesel fuel that will meaningfully reduce carbon emissions throughout the world, reduce America's dependence on foreign oil, and provide a safe and secure supply to our national defense – but only if Montana and the federal government take that risk with me.

Below, in section VI, my administration has put forth its best effort and ideas to reduce or even eliminate the barriers that still exist to accomplishing my vision, with benefits to the Crow Nation, Montana and America. More than anything, I desire to improve the Crow people's quality of life, create a future with good-paying jobs and employment benefits within the Crow Reservation, and provide hope and prosperity for the next seven generations of Crow citizens. Our mutual desires are within reach.

IV. Our Experience in Ascertaining Quality and Quantity of Resources

Since the beginning of my administration as Chairman of the Crow Nation Executive Branch, I have sought to ascertain, identify and evaluate the resources in order to effectuate my vision. I appointed an oil and gas committee (“OGC”) to begin this work. For the past 6 years, OGC has worked diligently to enhance the Crow Nation's reputation as a serious energy partner.

OGC has also been evaluating options, meeting with numerous energy partners, and engaging federal agencies for their regulatory review and approval as well as seeking assistance, financial and technical, from federal agencies to ascertain the quantity and quality of our resources. As noted earlier, OGC has been solely responsible for attracting and retaining companies that have successfully located oil and gas reserves within the Reservation. In addition, OGC cultivated a serious coal partner relationship that very nearly resulted in a transaction for the largest greenfield coal mine to be opened in the western United States in the past 40 years.

During my administration, we have worked with numerous federal agencies in the Department of Interior and would like to acknowledge and thank each agency for its efforts in assisting us. In particular, we have received help from the Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development (OIEED), under the auspices of Mr. Robert Middleton. Especially noteworthy is the consistent assistance we receive from a division under Mr. Middleton - the Division of Energy and Mineral Development (DEMD), located in Denver, Colorado. DEMD is led by Mr. Stephen Manydeeds.

DEMD is a group of geotechnical experts that has provided us with professional appraisals of our mineral assets, including coal, oil, natural gas, wind energy, and limestone. DEMD is staffed by experienced industry-based professionals who provide sound advice and counsel on energy and resource development as well as strategic business-decision making. DEMD's advice has included business development, strategic planning, resource marketing, identification of potential industry partners, detailed economic analyses, and assistance with negotiation of complex development agreements.

In addition, the Crow Nation has engaged a variety of private energy consultants in the past 18 months to accelerate processes with regard to specific resources, such as coal and wind. The consultants were specifically asked to examine identified resources based on their development potential and market opportunities, create a preliminary strategic development plan around the leading resource possibilities, and identify project opportunities to create jobs and provide long-term sustainable revenues.

With the tribal, federal and private teams, we have had some success (and some state assistance as well under Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer and his staff). Because development takes time and our budget is limited, we must rely primarily on our tribal and federal teams and efficiently utilize outside counsel and private consultants where necessary. I strongly believe a mix of experience and perspectives on energy development will be crucial to making my vision a reality.

V. Past and Present Challenges

A. The Past

Even though circumstances change, it is important to remember the past and causes that have prevented the Crow Nation from realizing its potential. The past is revealing. A close examination of federal Indian law, and Crow history in particular, demonstrates a pattern of invariable changes to the legal and political status of tribal governments and their citizens in order for non-Indians and American governments to unjustly capture wealth, especially when it comes to the subject of energy resources.

I think the following quote from a Commission of Indian Affairs Report from 1876 is particularly demonstrative of America's treatment of Indian resources in general and Crow minerals in particular: "Whenever an Indian reservation has on it good land, or timber, or minerals the cupidity of the white man is excited, and a constant struggle is inaugurated to dispossess the Indian, in which the avarice and determination of the white men usually prevails."

1. Railroad Rights-of-Way

For example, in 1864 (prior to the negotiation of the 1868 Treaty) Congress passed an act granting the Northern Pacific Railroad a right of way from Lake Superior all the way to Puget Sound. In the act, Congress "provided that the United States should extinguish as rapidly as may be consistent with public policy and the welfare of the Indians the Indian titles to all lands falling under the operation of this act." Even though this right of way cut a large swath out of Crow Country, this act is not mentioned in the 1868 Treaty. According to a 1940 claims case, the U.S. knew that the land the Crow Nation reserved would be affected by this land grant.

The three railroad acts of 1887, 1888 and 1889 are virtually identical; each unilateral federal act took Crow land for a different railroad. The railroads were the Rocky Fork and Cooke City Railway Company, Billings Clark's Fork and Cooke City Railroad Company, and the Big Horn Southern Railroad Company. The unilateral agreements promulgated by the U.S. Congress

ignore the 1868 Treaty provision requiring approval by a majority of tribal members for any cession of Crow land. The requirement of tribal consent was at the discretion of the President.

The Secretary of the Interior was to “fix the amount of compensation to be paid the Indians for such right of way.” According to a 1935 claims case, the following compensation was paid for the respective takings: the 1887 taking of 700 acres was for \$875.64; the 1888 taking of 1,377 acres was for \$4,133; and the 1889 taking is not mentioned. Each taking weakened the Tribe’s ability to develop its own resources and compensation was only marginally provided, if at all.

2. *Yellowtail Dam and Hydropower*

One of the primary opportunities for the Tribe to develop its energy resources was taken from it when the United States chose to develop the resource for itself. The Bureau of Reclamation’s Yellowtail Dam on the Big Horn River within the Crow Reservation was authorized as part of the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Project by the Flood Control Act of 1944. The value of this site was no secret; in fact, the 1920 Crow Allotment Act, Section 10, had guaranteed that unallotted lands within the Crow Reservation that were chiefly valuable for the development of water power would be reserved from allotment or other disposition under that act, for the benefit of the Crow Tribe of Indians.

This guarantee, for which Tribal members and their supporters worked tremendously hard, was ignored. On October 19, 1949, an Opinion by the Assistant Solicitor of the Department of the Interior even held that there was no authorization for forced acquisition of the land needed for the construction of Yellowtail Dam. However, a Solicitor’s Opinion of February 3, 1954, found that existing reclamation laws did grant that authority.

In 1958, the United States condemned Crow Reservation land for building Yellowtail Dam and then argued that no compensation to the Tribe for the land’s water power value was necessary. In contrast, the Flathead Indians and Warm Springs Indians received full power-site value for tribal lands used to build Kerr Dam and Pelton Dam under the Federal Power Act. In *U.S. v. 5,677.95 Acres of Land, More or Less, of Crow Reservation, State of Mont.*, 162 F. Supp. 108 (D. Mont. 1958), the court found that Congress intended for Yellowtail Dam land to be condemned but the Tribe was entitled to compensation based on the land’s water power value.

Yellowtail Dam became operational in 1966. The dam generates over a half billion kilowatt hours of power per year, even during drought conditions. To date, the power generation revenues have exceeded \$600 million dollars. Although the Crow Nation did receive a couple of million dollars for the land takings to create Yellowtail Dam, the Crow Nation did not receive, nor has it ever received, a payment for the ongoing revenue from power generation.

3. *Land*

Most of the land loss within Crow territory is the result of non-Indian ownership of large tracts of land in violation of the Crow Allotment Act, Section 2, which aimed to protect the Crow land base by placing limitations on the sizes of parcels that could be owned by individuals and corporations. These violations have led to clouded title for most landowners within the

Reservation. More than 800,000 acres of land within the Reservation (over a third of the total acreage) was already in fee status by the year 2000; approximately 600,000 acres of fee land continue to be owned in violation of Section 2.

In addition, the Crow Indian Reservation land base has been decimated by fractionated ownership of various allotments. The Department of the Interior estimates that over 10% of all fractionated lands within Indian country are actually within the Crow Reservation. By meaningfully addressing the fractionation issue at Crow, we would be making a significant impact on the national problem. The Crow have numerous parcels of allotted lands that have more than 10 owners and sometimes more than 100 owners.

Some federal laws address consent provisions, but this issue (and clouded title, discussed above) is very problematic for energy development. The consent provisions that exist are difficult to adhere to, and numerous misstatements of the law can be found in any set of transactions. Owners of fractionated interests, minority owners in particular, have great difficulty in having their voices heard or in being fairly compensated for their interests. In general, business partners are reluctant to submit to land tenure systems they cannot understand.

B. Present

1. Practical Issues

Despite the fact that the Crow Nation has substantial resources, numerous practical problems arise from the previously described history. The OGC and our energy partners, actual and potential, have experienced, and continue to experience, systematic problems in trying to create energy development. As demonstrated by the *Cobell* litigation, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (“BIA”) has a variety of issues that consistently create barriers and delays to resource development.

For example, the OGC created and the Crow legislature approved an oil and gas lease in January of 2005, but development did not begin until September 2007 because of an extremely slow BIA approval process. Within the approval process of that lease, an inventory of net mineral acres for the Crow Reservation was reported as 94,000 acres. However, after OGC and the energy partner reexamined the statistics with land information, an additional 50,000 net mineral acres was discovered for the Crow Nation (the 50,000 net mineral acres is worth \$250,000). An error of this magnitude would be simply unacceptable in many contexts, but in our experience it is not surprising and is far from unique.

BIA records for surface and mineral ownership are erroneous, missing and out of date. These problems cause significant delay with preparation of environmental documents and overall land records necessary for business transactions. It is extremely difficult to compete with off-reservation development because of these problems. Many companies view this, in addition to all other problems, as another prohibitive cost of doing business within the Crow Reservation.

In a similar example, recently with a separate lease, OGC and an energy partner discovered another error in records. The Bureau of Land Management had turned over abandoned gas wells

to the surface owner. However, upon review, it was discovered that the minerals actually belonged not to the surface owners but to the Crow Nation. It is hard to imagine this type of scenario occurring regularly with other governments and their energy partners without serious efforts to change the status quo in government regulation.

Finally, the Department of the Interior, and in specific the BIA, lacks necessary resources for even routine governmental regulatory functions. For example, the BIA area office in Billings, Montana, has one primary individual to work on environmental issues for eight (8) different Indian nations. If multiple tribes are exploring their resources and/or seeking approval of resource transactions (joint ventures, leases, etc.), it simply takes additional time to obtain approval – even with the best efforts of particular employees within the BIA.

2. *Jurisdiction and Tax Issues*

In an important civil jurisdiction case, *Montana v. U.S.*, 450 U.S. 544 (1981), the U.S. Supreme Court held that title to the bed of Big Horn River passed to Montana upon its admission to the Union, and did not vest in the Crow Nation. In addition, and very important to energy resource development, the Court held that the Crow Nation did not have presumptive civil jurisdiction over non-Indians on non-Indian fee land unless they met one of two specified exceptions. Both exceptions have proven elusive, if not impossible, to satisfy in the years since the decision.

Further, in *Strate v. A-1 Contractors*, 520 U.S. 438 (1997), the U.S. Supreme Court held that a public right-of-way across Indian land was equivalent to non-Indian fee land and thus not subject to tribal jurisdiction. Although it is true that an Indian nation can contract around *Montana* and *Strate*, the Crow Nation still encounters substantial difficulties when it tries to address pockets of fee land within its boundaries for exploration activities, surface access and right-of-way agreements. Moreover, companies with rights-of-way across Indian country protested or simply stopped paying taxes to Indian nations, correspondingly reducing tribal governmental revenues and services.

Moreover, this overall jurisdictional framework adds increased government regulatory authority over any given energy resource transaction (e.g., state, county and city) – another disincentive to doing business in Indian country. Therefore, at Crow and elsewhere in Indian country, energy partners must pay many additional costs and tribal governments must promise to protect the project by freezing future legislation and must agree to apply tribal taxes over the term of the project so that it does not exceed state taxes immediately off of the reservation to alleviate obstacles and level the development playing field.

In addition to *Montana* and *Strate*, the U.S. Supreme Court has further weakened the power of Indian nations to work toward economic self-sufficiency through a series of Indian tax decisions in the past 30 years – almost invariably increasing state tax authority to the detriment of tribal tax authority. In Indian country today, with relatively small geographic areas comprising some of the most impoverished communities in the United States, energy resources are potentially subject to five concurrent government taxes (federal, tribal, state, county and city). Energy partners and investors simply do not want to do business where there is substantial uncertainty and risk of triple or quadruple taxation.

3. *Recent Legislation*

With our partners and allies, we have spent valuable time protecting our rights to develop our energy resources. In 2006, we participated in numerous discussions related to Section 1813 of the 2005 Energy Policy Act, Energy Rights-of-Way Study. Like several other Indian nations, we argued that we should be able to negotiate our own energy rights-of-way agreements with our business partners, rather than have another federal law dictate those terms. Given our long history of battles over energy resources, I hope that legal and political decision-makers will appreciate our past and realize that we fight, forever, for our right to make decisions and develop our own resources, rather than see outsiders benefit from our energy wealth.

More recently, we have been seeking support to protest the unfair standards with drilling permit fees (Application for Permit to Drill, "APD") by the BLM for energy development requests in Indian country required by the Fiscal Year 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act. Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer (and Senator Max Baucus) wrote letters to inquire why Secretary of the Interior Kempthorne was applying a prohibitive \$4,000 filing fee for APDs involving Indian mineral resources.

Mr. Stephen Allard, an Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management, recently responded in a letter dated April 14, 2008, that the fee was not discretionary and it was necessary to offset a lack of federal appropriation to process the applications. In contrast, a company must pay \$100 to the Montana Board of Oil and Gas for a drilling permit immediately off of the Crow R\reservation and have the permit within three days. This discrepancy chills Indian mineral development and is the latest example of another unnecessary bureaucratic hurdle that slows, if not precludes, new investment in energy development in Indian country.

VI. Recommendations

A. *DEMD*

In sum, DEMD has been invaluable (as well as Crow OCG) and we would not be in a favorable position to engage in large scale industrial development without DEMD's assistance. I once again want to express our sincere thanks to Mr. Middleton and Mr. Manydeeds. However, we would suggest that DEMD continue to receive your support, financial and otherwise, in order to assist the Crow Nation and other Indian nations to develop their energy resources (or if they have the financial capacity, assistance with participation in the overall energy market) and become self-sufficient.

B. *Federal Water Legislation*

My administration also views our federal legislation ratifying Crow (and non-Indian) water rights as central to any and all energy development within the Reservation. Within the short term, the Crow Nation will submit federal legislation to ratify its Water Compact with the State of Montana and to finalize a federal settlement of its water claims. The Compact was approved by the Montana Legislature in 1999. For any large scale energy development, our energy

partners need certainty and predictability to be able to use water for development without fear of litigation or uncertainties.

As important, upon ratification of the Compact by the United States and by the Crow people, the Crow Nation will assume the administration of its water right on the Reservation. The federal financial contribution to the settlement will provide funds for the development of sorely needed water systems on the Reservation (primarily safe, clean drinking water throughout the Reservation) as well as the repair of the Crow Federal Irrigation Project. The Tribe's largest single protected right under the Compact is 500,000 acre-feet per year from the Bighorn River, subject to numerous limitations to protect existing users, both Tribal and state, as of 1999, and to protecting the in-stream flow of the famous and sacred Big Horn River.

C. Crow Land Restoration Act

Another extremely vital piece of legislation to support in the development of our energy resources concerns the strengthening of the tribal land base, previously weakened by allotment, fractionation, and other historic processes. Today, our approach is to respect reliance interests and reduce fractionation by repurchasing land from willing buyers. Senate Bill Number 1080, the Crow Tribe Land Restoration Act, was introduced by Senator Max Baucus on April 10, 2007. It would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to develop a program to help the Crow Nation acquire and manage land and interests in land on the Crow Reservation, with purchases funded through a loan to the Nation of up to \$380,000,000.

D. Tax

We also ask for continued interest and efforts on Indian tax legislation, including long-term renewals of the following: (i) tax credit on Indian coal from the 2005 Energy Policy Act; (ii) accelerated depreciation in Indian country, excluding gaming, provisions of the Internal Revenue Code ("IRC"); (iii) an enlarged scope of Indian employment tax credit for private employers on Indian reservations; and (iv) treating tribes as states in all aspects under the essential governmental function test in existing sections of the IRC.

Similarly, it is necessary for a federal legislative clarification that the tax base in Indian country, existing and future, is subject to the sole tax authority of Indian nations on the local level (pre-empting state and local tax authority) for funding to provide tribal governmental services. Multiple governmental taxes in some of the poorest counties in America are unjust and are a core problem for energy development in Indian country. It is my opinion that treating tribes as states for all tax purposes will begin to ease the tax and regulatory burdens on energy partners seeking to assist Indian nations to become the primary governing entity, and an energy partner with the states and federal government, in Indian country.

Conclusion

We definitely could use your assistance in setting the foundation to make our vision a reality. We have been very busy in working to develop our energy resources and to remove obstacles to successful development. We hope to be a worthwhile model for other tribes, and to live in the

near future in a time when our own resources, in our own hands, provide everything necessary for the health, hopes and future of our people.

It is critical that Congress act to protect Indian nations' natural resources and secure Indian nations as the primary governing entity over their own homelands. Not only will this work be important in its own right, but it will have numerous benefits for the local communities and federal government as well. The Crow Nation has been an ally of the United States all through its history.

Today, the Crow Nation desires to develop its vast natural resources not only for itself, but to once again help the United States with a new goal -- achieving energy independence, securing a domestic supply of valuable energy, and separating itself from its dependence on foreign oil. The Crow Nation, as many Indian nations, are veterans of the United States Armed Forces and we have a special understanding and respect for what it could mean to our sons and daughters in coming years if all of our energy needs were met here at home.

It is time for the Crow Nation to become an energy partner. However, my vision can only become a reality with your (and local government) assistance. I strongly feel that the vision starts today, with your help and assistance. Mr. Chairman and Committee members, thank you again for the opportunity to testify on Indian Energy before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.