COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
CHAIRMAN LAMAR SMITH

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Statement of Energy Subcommittee Chairman Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.)
Hearing on Bakken Petroleum: The Substance of Energy Independence

Chairman Lummis: Good afternoon. I would like to welcome our witnesses to today's hearing titled Bakken Petroleum: The Substance of Energy Independence. Today, the Energy and Oversight Subcommittees will inquire about the characteristics and behavior of petroleum produced from the Bakken region.

Petroleum from the Bakken region recently passed 1 million barrels per day, which accounts for approximately 12% of total domestic production. This is an important resource for the United States and it deserves due attention.

That said, we are not here today to debate the merits of rail or pipeline transportation, or their current and proposed regulations. Those are important issues, but today we have a scientific focus: the characteristics and behavior of Bakken petroleum.

As we will hear today, the DOT's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, also known as "PHMSA," has undertaken a broad sampling and testing program to better understand if or to what extent Bakken petroleum may be unique from other petroleum types.

In July 2014, PHMSA released a report, titled "Operation Safe Delivery Update," which concluded that Bakken petroleum "is more volatile than most other types of crude – which correlates to increased ignitability and flammability." These conclusions regarding: (1) volatility without context and (2) the assertion that volatility necessarily correlates to increased ignitability and flammability have generated significant controversy, which I am hopeful we can resolve in today's hearing.

The written testimony of our PHMSA and DOE witnesses clarifies the context of volatility: that petroleum from the Bakken region is properly classified as a "light, sweet crude oil" and not outside the norms for light crude oils. And today's DOE written testimony states that "more scientific analysis is needed to better define the relationship between volatility and ignitability/flammability."

The Science Committee will be interested to hear about the results of DOE's research as it progresses. I look forward to further discussion and again, I thank today's witnesses for participating in today's hearing.

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