



Committee: Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies

Event: [A Review of the President's Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Request for the Department of the Interior](#)

Date: April 22, 2026

Executive Summary:

On April 22, 2026, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies held a hearing to review the President's Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) budget request for the Department of the Interior (DOI). Interior Secretary **Doug Burgum** provided testimony. The primary themes of the hearing included the administration's focus on "energy dominance," proposed structural reorganizations within DOI, and efforts to address deferred maintenance on public lands.

- Republican members praised the administration's efforts to cut red tape, expand domestic energy production, and reform the permitting process.
- Democratic members strongly criticized the proposed budget cuts to the National Park Service (NPS), the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and renewable energy programs.
- A recurring bipartisan concern was staffing shortages across various DOI agencies, which members argued are hindering the department's ability to process tribal probate cases, manage national parks, and execute infrastructure projects.

Member Toplines:

[Chair Lisa Murkowski \(R-AK\)](#): Murkowski raised concerns about deep cuts to key agencies and spending initiatives. She praised the administration's efforts to unleash Alaska's resource potential, including the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska lease sales and the Ambler Access Project. She cautiously expressed interest in discussing the newly proposed Marine Minerals Administration (MMA). Murkowski concluded by stressing the need for adequate staffing at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and stating that while she supports domestic resource production, the FY27 bill must permit all forms of energy, "including renewables, which we can't arbitrarily exclude from our nation's energy portfolio."

[Ranking Member Jeff Merkley \(D-OR\)](#): Merkley condemned DOI for reorganizing the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) into MMA – two of the largest offshore wind regulatory and permitting agencies – without congressional notification. He also criticized the Department of Justice's recent payout agreement with TotalEnergies to cancel their offshore wind pipeline in favor of fossil fuels. Merkley argued that DOI has enacted policies to make renewable energy development more difficult, noting the President's disdain for wind turbines, and he highlighted that the proposed budget would eliminate all funding for renewable energy permitting and research. He objected

to significant proposed budget cuts to tribal programs, conservation efforts, and the NPS, describing them as harmful to communities and public lands.

Witness Toplines:

[Doug Burgum, Secretary, DOI](#): Burgum emphasized the budget request's focus on "energy dominance," regulatory reform, and more efficient management of public lands and resources to promote economic growth and national security. He highlighted efforts to expand domestic energy and critical mineral development, and streamline agency functions. He also applauded DOI's recent record lease sale of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, which he claimed generated record-levels of revenue for Native Alaskans living in the North Slope Borough. Burgum also underscored commitments to Tribal engagement, public safety, wildfire management, and enhancing outdoor recreation and infrastructure through programs like the *Great American Outdoors Act's* [Legacy Restoration Fund](#).

Major Takeaways:

- Burgum emphasized that to streamline offshore energy and critical mineral development, the budget proposes creating a unified MMA by consolidating BOEM and BSEE.
- Sen. **Martin Heinrich** (D-NM) criticized DOI for reversing a mineral withdrawal around Chaco Canyon without adequate Tribal consultation. He also expressed alarm over the loss of 15 percent of the NPS workforce and proposed further cuts.
 - Burgum committed to conducting in-person consultations with affected Tribes regarding Chaco Canyon. Regarding NPS, he argued the goal is to reduce administrative staff in regional and D.C. offices while increasing frontline park staff through new local and seasonal hiring flexibilities.
- Sen. **Shelley Moore-Capito** (R-WV) emphasized the urgent need for bipartisan permitting reform for the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) and *Endangered Species Act* (ESA) to foster investment in energy and minerals projects. Capito asked how Burgum views permitting reform relative to economic growth.
 - Burgum called it "absolutely essential" to growth, arguing that the current system diminishes American competitiveness globally. He stated that NEPA and the ESA must return to their original intent rather than being "weaponized" to stall or halt domestic development.
 - Murkowski asked for a commitment that DOI is ensuring adequate staffing for permitting. Burgum affirmed this commitment, noting that employees involved in permitting were strictly barred from taking voluntary early retirements.
- Sen. **Jon Husted** (R-OH) praised the proposed \$33 billion natural gas facility in Ohio, emphasizing the need for baseload power to support artificial intelligence (AI) data centers and advanced manufacturing.
 - Burgum enthusiastically supported the project, stating that natural gas is the most affordable and reliable way to meet the AI sector's rising electricity demands. He criticized past administrations that favored "intermittent and weather-dependent" energy, which he argued resulted in higher consumer costs and a less reliable grid.

- Merkley requested a commitment to hold public meetings for the Oregon BLM's proposed revised resource management plan for Western Oregon, which Burgum provided.
- Merkley accused DOI of politicizing the [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#) (LWCF) by disproportionately directing funds to Republican-leaning states. Burgum denied any political bias in LWCF allocations, suggesting that funding disparities often relate to state-level matching contributions.
- Sen. **John Hoeven** (R-ND) sought continued support for the Eastern North Dakota Alternative Water Supply program. Burgum committed to supporting the initiative and praised North Dakota's high percentage of state-level cost-sharing for water projects.
 - In his exchange with Hoeven, Burgum emphasized that the *Federal Land Policy and Management Act's* "multiple-use doctrine" legally mandates public lands be open to appropriate mineral development, energy production, timber, and recreation.