



Committee: Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee
Event: [Full Committee Hearing to Examine the President's Budget Request for the Department of the Interior for Fiscal Year 2027](#)
Date: April 29, 2026

Executive Summary:

On April 29, 2026, the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee held a hearing to examine the President's proposed fiscal year 2027 budget request for the Department of the Interior (DOI).

- Interior Secretary **Doug Burgum** and Republicans on the committee advocated for "American energy dominance," streamlining traditional energy development, and consolidating DOI agencies to promote organizational efficiency.
- Democrats stressed the importance of accelerating the clean energy transition and investing in conservation and Tribal Nations.
- A major point of bipartisan consensus was the need to reauthorize the Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) to repair aging infrastructure on public lands, while permitting reform for both traditional and renewable energy projects emerged as a significant point of contention throughout the hearing.

Member Toplines¹:

Chair Mike Lee (R-UT): Lee criticized Biden-era policies that he argued prioritized climate initiatives over traditional energy development. He praised the new budget proposals for focusing on "American energy dominance," active land management, and reducing reliance on foreign supply chains. He specifically commended the proposed unification of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) into a new Marine Minerals Administration (MMA) to improve efficiency.

Ranking Member Martin Heinrich (D-NM): Heinrich emphasized DOI's role in conservation, tribal support, and the clean energy transition. He strongly criticized the proposed budget cuts to the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). He also accused DOI of illegally stalling wind and solar permits, arguing that passing a bipartisan permitting reform package is impossible if the current administration remains biased against renewables.

Witness Toplines:

[Doug Burgum, Secretary, DOI:](#) Burgum stressed that the budget request reflects the administration's priorities by emphasizing energy dominance, deregulation, public land access, and more efficient government operations. He mentioned the North Slope Borough in the

¹ The opening remarks of Chairman Lee and Ranking Member Heinrich were unavailable at the time of this memo's distribution.

context of the record lease sale held last month in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska. Burgum argued the administration had reversed prior restrictions on land and water use by expanding energy development, critical minerals production, lease sales, and outdoor recreation opportunities while maintaining environmental protections. He also outlined plans to unify BOEM and BSEE to create the MMA, aimed at streamlining offshore minerals governance, endangered species oversight, and related permitting processes to reduce bureaucracy and improve efficiency.

Major Takeaways:

Energy Permitting

- Sen. **John Barrasso** (R-WY) asked Burgum for the administration's permitting reform priorities. Burgum responded that an inefficient permitting system slows capital investment and hinders economic prosperity. He stated the administration's primary goal is to increase efficiency to reverse this trend. Burgum also called for the end of the weaponization of the *Endangered Species Act* and the *National Environmental Policy Act*.
- Sen. **Angus King** (I-ME) expressed concern that the administration would continue prioritizing oil and gas permits over renewable energy projects, even in light of a recent court [preliminary injunction](#) and under a future scenario in which Congress passed comprehensive permitting reform.
 - Sens. Heinrich and **Mazie Hirono** (D-HI) also expressed deep concern over the stalling of renewable energy permits.
 - Burgum stated the DOI disagrees with the recent court injunction regarding their review process of renewable projects on BLM land.
- Sens. King and **Alex Padilla** (D-CA) argued that wind and solar, paired with battery storage, are cost-effective and reliable, urging the DOI to stop stalling renewable permits. Burgum countered that renewables lack baseline reliability and that traditional energy sources are necessary for grid security.
 - He also challenged the economics of renewable energy by citing the end of the clean energy tax credits under the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act* as evidence that wind and solar are not economically competitive without government support. King countered this argument by arguing for the elimination of all energy subsidies, including those for fossil fuels.
- Padilla expressed frustration with the administration for paying offshore wind developers to stop developing projects off the coast of California, which contradicts the administration's own "energy dominance" rhetoric.

Hydropower & Water Programs

- Sens. **Catherine Cortez Masto** (D-NV) and **John Hickenlooper** (D-CO) criticized the budget for cutting the [WaterSMART](#) program.
- Cortez Masto expressed concerns with reduced hydropower generation at the Hoover Dam and the impact it would have on energy prices in Nevada, California, and Arizona.
 - Burgum acknowledged this concern but did not outline a specific mitigation plan.

- Sen. **Maria Cantwell** (D-WA) noted Washington state’s declining snowpack and the resulting loss of electricity production from hydropower. She urged Burgum to support getting all sources of electricity, including wind, solar, and hydropower, onto the grid in the region.

DOI Restructuring

- Sen. **Cindy Hyde-Smith** (R-MS) supported the merger of BOEM and BSEE and asked questions about how the unification plan would maintain safety for offshore oil and gas workers. Padilla expressed concern that the merger reverses safety protocols put in place after the Deepwater Horizon spill.
 - Burgum assured the Committee that the merger eliminates redundancies and will increase the number of safety inspections without compromising environmental protections.

Legislation & Project Initiatives

- Sen. **Lisa Murkowski** (R-AK) discussed the Next-Generation Geothermal Research and Development Act ([S. 4406](#)), which she co-introduced the day prior. Her reference was embedded in a broader statement about embracing all forms of energy as part of an “energy dominance” strategy.
- Sen. **Steve Daines** (R-MT) secured Burgum’s commitment to help pass the America the Beautiful Act ([S. 1547](#)) by July 4, 2026.
- Sen. **John Hoeven** (R-ND) discussed the "Crack the Code 2.0” initiative — a carbon capture and enhanced oil recovery project in North Dakota. Burgum supported the project, noting that increasing domestic energy production is vital to powering data centers and winning the global artificial intelligence race.
- A bipartisan group of Members expressed support for reauthorizing the LRF.