



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
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Pallone Calls for Investments in Environmental Infrastructure

“Cutting environmental protections may benefit some in the short term, but others will pay with their health and welfare.”

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) spoke about the importance of making real investments in environmental infrastructure at a subcommittee hearing today titled, “Modernizing Environmental Laws: Challenges and Opportunities for Expanding Infrastructure and Promoting Development and Manufacturing”:*

Our nation’s crumbling infrastructure is a pressing issue that we must address, and in this Subcommittee that means investing in drinking water infrastructure, Superfund cleanups, and Brownfields grants. Our current investments in these critical public health programs are simply not enough. This week’s evacuations in California related to the Oroville Dam are the latest example, but far from the only example.

My Democratic colleagues and I have repeatedly introduced legislation to modernize and fund these infrastructure programs, but Republicans have consistently opposed or blocked those efforts.

Today, I join many of the Democrats on this Subcommittee in announcing the reintroduction of the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments and Ranking Member Tonko’s AQUA Act to fund drinking water infrastructure efforts. When Democrats controlled the House, the AQUA Act passed easily on a bipartisan voice vote. But since Republicans took over, they have avoided the issue. I hope this hearing is a sign that Republicans are ready to join our infrastructure efforts.

As the federal government has pulled back infrastructure funding in recent years, the backlog of infrastructure repairs and replacement has grown, and so has the price tag to address it. Delaying pipe replacements until water mains burst costs more than planning ahead. Delaying Superfund cleanups while contaminants spread in the environment costs more than quickly containing and addressing pollution. In the long run, we are not saving money by ignoring this problem. And only public funding can close the gap for the communities in need.

I expect my Republican colleagues will suggest today that the key to spurring infrastructure is environmental deregulation, instead of public funding. That approach is dangerous and short-sighted.

Environmental protections are essential for public health, for the economic viability of our communities, and for the preservation of our natural resources. The benefits of environmental protections far outweigh the cost, so repealing those protections would hurt far more than it would help. Cutting environmental protections may benefit some in the short term, but others will pay with their health and welfare.

We will hear today from Melissa Mays, a resident of Flint, Michigan. The ongoing drinking water crisis in Flint will only be solved with significant federal funding. Melissa's experience shows why environmental protections are so important, and what can happen when short term economic decisions overrule environmental considerations.

Any efforts by Republicans in Congress and President Trump to remove environmental protections will have lasting consequences, unleashing dangerous pollution that could take decades to clean.

We will also hear today from the mayor of New Bedford, Massachusetts, whose harbor is a Superfund site thanks to the unrestricted dumping of PCBs decades ago. That harbor, like the Superfund sites in my district, shows the long-term costs of having to clean up pollution – costs that could have been avoided if stronger environmental protections had been in place.

Mayor Mitchell will also tell us about new clean energy jobs in New Bedford, in both the solar and wind energy industries. These are good jobs, driven in part by environmental protections.

There are numerous small manufacturers nationwide that develop and manufacture air pollution control equipment. The experience and innovative technologies produced in this sector position these manufacturers as leaders in international markets for pollution control and environmental services. Repealing air quality regulations would not only eliminate vital public health protections, it would also kill those jobs.

When it comes to infrastructure, Democrats will continue to fight for the federal investments our communities need. These investments strengthen public health while also creating good-paying jobs. And when it comes to environmental protections, Democrats will continue to lead the fight for safe drinking water, clean air, and clean land.

We can have a safe environment and a strong economy. In fact, in the long run, a safe environment is absolutely necessary for a strong economy.

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