

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on “American Energy Expansion: Strengthening Economic, Environmental, and National Security”

January 31, 2023

Thank you, Chair Rodgers. We are very proud of the fact that we now have the first woman to chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee and its long history that goes back to almost the first days of the Republic.

I want to say that we are meeting for the Committee’s first hearing of the 118th Congress. The first few weeks of any Congress are an opportunity to lay out priorities for the next two years. Unfortunately, the energy bills that Republicans have brought to the floor this month have only demonstrated just how misguided and misplaced their priorities are.

Two bills were mentioned by the Chair, one that bans the sale of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) to China and one that prevents the use of the SPR unless we opened up more public lands for drilling on the same percentage basis. They’re both misguided because they’re an attempt to limit this Administration’s ability to bring down gasoline prices at the pump.

Moving towards clean energy is the future and the only way we’re going to have less dependence on dictators and less volatility in the market. Both these bills were an attempt to try to give more opportunities to Big Oil.

Republicans have pushed this idea that somehow Big Oil wanted to pump more but couldn’t. In reality, they wanted to keep the price artificially high.

That’s another reason why they opposed using the Strategic Petroleum Reserve because it brought prices down, so all I’m basically saying is as we move towards an energy transition let’s keep in mind that encouraging renewables as we did with the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

This is the way to go in the future. I’m someone who believes that we have to use all sources of energy like nuclear and hydropower.

The bottom line is we’re going to be left behind if we don’t move towards renewables.

The Chair also mentioned China. Make no mistake: the rest of the world, particularly China, has already embarked on a major transition to clean energy. In fact, China’s investments in clean energy are so vast, the International Energy Agency forecasts that over the next several

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years, 40 percent of solar and wind energy growth will come from China alone. Yet Republicans consistently oppose our efforts to catch up.

If we don't move towards clean energy and if we don't use the incentives from the Inflation Reduction Act, we're going to be left behind—left behind in innovation and left behind in number of jobs created. The irony of it is, most if not all, Republicans in the House voted against the Inflation Reduction Act, yet many of those credits are going to Red States and industries in the Red States that want to take advantage of those credits.

This is not a Republican or Democratic issue. This is a bipartisan issue. We need to move towards clean energy.

Madam Chair, I just wanted to mention that one of our witnesses today is Dr. Unruh Cohen. I want to thank her for all of her work as Staff Director for the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis. I look forward to her testimony and the testimony of all the panel.

I just want to take a moment to thank our longtime staff director of our energy and environment policy team, Rick Kessler, who is retiring this week. After 25 years of dedicated service to Congress – of which 12 years were spent with this Committee – Rick has more than earned his retirement. Earlier in his career, Rick also worked in my personal office on energy and environmental issues. Last Congress, Rick was instrumental in our work on the Inflation Reduction Act, fighting to make sure meaningful climate investments – including many provisions from our own CLEAN Future Act – were included. During his tenure, he was also instrumental in helping us pass the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety Act, the Pipeline Safety Act, legislation phasing down the use of dangerous HFCs, and many, many more energy and environmental laws.

He has been a devoted member of our team, always guided by a sincere desire to improve peoples' lives, and I am personally grateful for his many years of service. I wish him nothing but the best in the future.