

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Environment, Manufacturing, and Critical Materials Ranking Member
Paul Tonko

Markup of Three Bills

July 12, 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For many years, we have heard Republicans on this committee talk about the need for innovation to address our pollution challenges. And today, we are at the beginning of a technology revolution in the transportation sector.

Zero-emission vehicles are becoming increasingly cost competitive, increasingly available with all different makes, models, and price points, and increasingly in demand by American consumers.

People realize that zero-emission vehicles have the ability to meet the overwhelming majority of their driving needs today while saving them thousands of dollars in fuel and maintenance costs over the life of the vehicle.

This all sounds pretty great. And that is even before acknowledging that these vehicles will drastically reduce harmful climate and traditional pollutants.

And thanks to the investments included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, the manufacturing supply chains for these vehicles, their batteries, and their charging equipment are increasingly being built here in the United States— creating jobs and enabling the U. S. to retain the mantle of the greatest auto manufacturing country in the world for another generation.

That is what innovation looks like. And that innovation— like most innovation— is being driven by a mix of consumer trends, financial incentives, and regulatory policies.

Unfortunately, the Republican majority wants to stifle America’s next great industrial revolution before we even get into the race with China and dozens of other foreign competitors.

And the three bills before us today are just the latest examples of the majority not only trying to undermine market trends, but to prevent the EPA from carrying out its mission to protect human health and the environment.

EPA has a responsibility to protect Americans from harmful air pollution, and the transportation sector is the largest contributor to U.S. climate pollution, as well as a major source of other dangerous pollutants.

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As we know, EPA recently proposed new tailpipe standards for light-duty vehicles for model years 2027 through 2032. In fact, the comment period ended just last week.

But H.R. 4468, the Choice in Automobile Retail Sales Act of 2023, seeks to prejudge the outcome of that process and prohibit EPA from finalizing this rule.

The majority does not seem to care that the proposed rule will save lives, save consumers money, and bolster American manufacturing.

Similarly, H.R. 1435, the Preserving Choice in Vehicle Purchases Act, would restrict EPA from allowing California to set more protective vehicle emission standards to address its extraordinary pollution challenges.

This bill not only infringes on California's ability to protect its citizens from dangerous air pollution, but also the rights of more than a dozen other states, including New York, that opt to follow California's rules.

And finally, H.R. 4469, the No Fuel Credits for Batteries Act of 2023, prohibits EPA from moving forward with eRINs under the Renewable Fuel Standard program.

As we heard from EPA during the legislative hearing, the Clean Air Act does not say that transportation fuels must be liquid fuels. And in order to qualify for credits under the RFS, the electricity would still need to be generated from eligible feedstocks.

Prohibiting EPA from moving forward with eRINs will continue to limit—and, in some cases, prevent—wastewater plants and landfills that capture biogas from participating in the RFS.

The RFS should seek to keep up with innovations in transportation. And that means continuing to incentivize all eligible renewable fuels, not a specific type of vehicle technology.

As I said at the legislative hearing, these bills seek to create uncertainty for the private sector, disrupting the tens of billions of dollars of planned investments to develop and produce the next generation of clean vehicle technologies.

Instead, we should embrace this opportunity to lead the world in cleaner, more efficient vehicles. It is going to create jobs, reduce pollution, and save lives. In fact, it is already doing so.

I urge Members to oppose the three bills before us today, and for all of us to move forward with an eye toward how we can make sure all of our constituents are better able to benefit from the ongoing transportation revolution.

Thank you. I yield back.