

Opening Statement  
Chairman Bobby L. Rush  
Subcommittee on Energy  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Hearing on “Legislative Solutions to Make Our Nation’s Pipelines Safer”  
June 19, 2019

I want to thank you all for attending today’s important hearing entitled “Legislative Solutions to Make Our Nation’s Pipelines Safer.”

I want to welcome all of our witnesses that will be testifying, including some who are returning from our May oversight hearing.

This morning we will be examining the Safer Pipelines Act of 2019, as well as H.R. 2139, the “Leonel Rondon Pipeline Safety Act,” introduced by our colleagues from Massachusetts: Mr. Trahan, Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Moulton.

Additionally, Members may also inquire about provisions of the Pipeline Safety Legislative Proposal introduced earlier this month by PHMSA.

I want to be clear right from the outset that the discussion draft introduced by the majority side represents many provisions that Chairman Pallone, myself and many Democratic colleagues would, ideally, like to see included in pipeline safety reauthorization.

However, as we have said on numerous occasions, both Chairman Pallone and I would like for this process to be transparent and open, and we look forward to working with Members of the minority, PHMSA and other important stakeholders to ultimately draft legislation that will receive wide, bipartisan support.

With that being said, I would like to highlight some of the important provisions included in the discussion draft that I believe would make our nation’s pipeline infrastructure safer and more secure.

One of the major components of the draft is that it would regulate many of the 435,000 miles of gathering lines, including all onshore pipelines operating above a specified pressure.

I believe this is a commonsense measure that would help to inform and protect communities surrounding these gathering lines, which today remain completely unregulated.

The draft would also eliminate the “grandfather clause” so that pipelines built prior to July 1, 1970, would no longer be exempt from testing for their maximum allowable operating pressure.

The bill would eliminate the duplicative cost-benefit requirements, which is currently only

imposed on PHMSA, and which is at least partly responsible for the agency missing so many of its deadlines for rulemakings, according to former Administrator Quarterman.

The legislation also mandates automatic leak detection and shutoff valves for pipelines located in high consequence areas, a provision that should help save vital time and potentially loss of life and property in the event of an accident.

I believe that each of these provisions, as well as additional measures that would help bring additional resources and critical operational information to communities and first-responders, as both the Subcommittee discussion draft and H.R. 2139 does, would help to strengthen our nation's pipeline safety regime.

I look forward to engaging with today's witnesses on these proposals, and also working with my colleagues on the minority side to further enhance this legislation as we move through the Committee process.

With that I yield the balance of my time, and now I would like to recognize my friend and colleague, Ranking Member Upton for his opening statement.