

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security Ranking Member Diana DeGette
Hearing on “American Energy Expansion: Strengthening Economic, Environmental, and
National Security”
January 31, 2023

Thank you so much, Madam Chair—it's really fun to say that.

I want to say one of the things that makes the Energy and Commerce Committee so unique is not just our vast jurisdiction, but the willingness of members to work together in a bipartisan way to get things done for the American people.

I've had the honor of serving on this storied committee since I was a freshman member of Congress. As the Chair of the Oversight and Investigation subcommittee for the past four years, I'm proud of the work that we did to hold the oil and gas industries accountable for the high gas prices last year and to help move our country forward.

In just the past four years, the full Committee has passed legislation to strengthen our energy infrastructure, accelerate the deployment of new clean energy technologies, and help reduce the harmful emissions that are driving the climate crisis.

Thanks to those efforts, we've put our nation on course to becoming truly energy independent, and no longer dependent on the global oil market, which is the goal. I'm hoping this hearing doesn't indicate that the Majority is looking for ways to turn back the clock on that progress.

I was disturbed that the Majority memo that I read didn't mention renewable energy sources one single time and, instead, doubled down on frankly outdated policies advocating for increased fossil fuel production, which will impede U.S. energy independence, and, ironically, make us more dependent on an unstable international market.

That's because, oil and gas is an international market—if we produce more here, it just goes into the international market.

We've all heard the slogans, “drill, baby drill,” “energy dominance”, and now, “energy expansion”. But don't be fooled; these policies will not expand our potential for new renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar. They will only increase our dependence on oil and gas, and that will weaken our economic, environmental, and national security in the process.

They're nothing more than a giveaway to the oil industry to further pad their profits.

Like Ranking Member Pallone, I was dismayed by the early energy bills considered on the floor.

Just last week, Congress considered H.R. 21, a bill that would open our public lands to oil and gas exploitation and limit the President's ability to respond to future energy emergency through the SPR.

We've seen this all-out push to expand oil and gas drilling before, and it just doesn't work. Last February, the United States produced more than 11 million barrels of oil per day—one of the highest levels of crude oil production in US history. But when Vladimir Putin launched his war of aggression in Ukraine, the price of gasoline skyrocketed. We as a nation were immediately reminded of how reliant we continue to be on a global commodity that is subject to disruptions of international markets.

The only way to secure our economic prosperity, our environment and our national security is to break the addiction to oil as soon as possible. To do that, we must transition to clean energy technologies. I think that we could work across the aisle on this. I think that we could work together on supporting the research that we need to advance new clean energy technologies that will both make us energy independent and help us reach our nation's climate goals.

I'm sorry that my colleagues didn't support the CHIPS and Science Act that made investments in our energy and science agencies. I'm looking forward to working with Chair Duncan and with our friends on the other side of the aisle; we've already talked and I do think that we can find bipartisan ways to both reduce our dependence on the international oil market and also to develop clean energy that will address the climate crisis.

But what we have to do, Madam Chair, in my opinion, we have to stop retreating to our corners, seeing everything as a zero-sum game for whatever side. The markets, the utility companies, and others have realized this. They have been moving to clean energy sources as fast as they can. They need our help to be able to have the research and development to be able to make this secure, to make the grid secure, and to make the sources so that we can transition to a clean energy economy, be independent, and address the climate crisis.

I look forward to working with you and with this committee—I'm excited about it. We have to really hold out the branch and not talk about just drilling.

With that, Madam Chair, I yield back.