

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

Hearing on “The CLEAN Future Act: Driving Decarbonization of the Transportation Sector”

May 5, 2021

One of this Committee’s top priorities is taking action to address the climate crisis. In the last several months, we have held numerous legislative hearings on the CLEAN Future Act, our comprehensive and ambitious legislation to combat the climate crisis and to achieve a 100 percent clean economy no later than 2050. Today, the Energy Subcommittee is focusing on decarbonizing the transportation sector through investments in electric vehicles and EV infrastructure.

We’ll be discussing a suite of provisions in the CLEAN Future Act that support electric vehicle infrastructure and domestic manufacturing of EV-related technology. The Subcommittee will also review legislation from Chairman Rush, Representative Clarke, and Representative Dingell that are also included in the CLEAN Future Act. I thank them for their leadership on these important provisions.

Electrifying the transportation sector is critical to meeting our climate goals. This is particularly important since we will be simultaneously working to decarbonize the power sector, which will result in EVs becoming even cleaner in the future. It is expected that nearly seven million electric vehicles will be sold per year by 2025. To ensure we are ready for this growing demand, we must invest in the necessary charging and manufacturing infrastructure so that consumers are able to reliably power their cars.

President Biden’s American Jobs Plan invests heavily in EVs and infrastructure, with a goal to build a network of 500,000 EV chargers by 2030. The President’s plan recognizes the important role of EVs in our economic recovery and growth, and in our fight against climate change. The legislation we are discussing today is part of this larger effort.

At the same time, we must also guarantee the benefits of electric vehicles are available and accessible to all communities. Minority communities often have the most exposure to polluted air from gasoline and diesel-powered vehicles. Electric vehicle access can help provide cleaner transportation options in these communities.

Rural and underserved communities also stand to benefit from EV infrastructure development as EV charging infrastructure can help support local economies. I’m particularly excited to hear from Francis Energy today about its rollout of a statewide EV infrastructure network in Oklahoma.

Perhaps most importantly, as we see growing EV adoption in this country, we must make sure our transition prioritizes American workers. China and other countries are rapidly growing their EV markets and therefore we must invest aggressively to ensure we don't lose the EV market to China. It's imperative this investment occur here to grow an American EV manufacturing base that employs union workers, at good wages, with real benefits.

That's why the CLEAN Future Act provides funding for Domestic Manufacturing Conversion Grants to help create and expand domestic manufacturing of advanced vehicles and advanced vehicle components. It also modernizes and expands the Department of Energy's Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing program, or ATVM.

Today, we will also discuss the role of critical minerals and foreign supply chains in the EV industry. My Republican colleagues are right to point out the problems with the labor practices and, in some cases, outright exploitation that occurs in the extraction of some of the critical minerals found in the batteries in electric vehicles. Democrats share these concerns and believe we should work together to find new, reliable, and responsible sources for these materials. The CLEAN Future Act includes provisions that begin to address the extraction, reprocessing, and reuse of critical minerals.

Make no mistake – electric vehicles are the future. That's coming from the auto industry itself. And therefore, we need to do everything we can to ensure America leads that future by making the necessary investments now. With these bills, we are investing in innovation and helping give consumers the ability to choose between more than just gasoline or diesel. We must ensure that our roads, our grid, and our workers are prepared for this important transition. When charging stations are as ubiquitous as gas stations, then consumers will have a choice, and we truly will be in a position to win the future.

Thank you, and I yield back.