



COMMITTEE ON  
**ENERGY & COMMERCE**  
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

DEMOCRATS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr., as prepared for delivery  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Energy and Power  
Hearing on “Oversight of the Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job  
Creation Act of 2011 and Related Issues”**

Thank you Chairman Whitfield and Ranking Member Rush for holding this long overdue oversight hearing on the 2011 Pipeline Safety Act.

The vast network of transmission pipelines in this country are considered by most Americans as “out of sight, out of mind.” But when something goes wrong the presence of these facilities can make themselves known in the most devastating and sometimes deadly ways. Unfortunately, there are one too many examples of this since 2010, first in San Bruno, California, then in Marshall, Michigan and most recently in Santa Barbara. There, the rupture of a Plains All American pipeline spilled over 100,000 gallons of crude oil onto the coastline.

And I am no stranger to the damage that can be caused by pipeline failures. Twenty-one years ago a pipeline exploded in my district, in Edison, New Jersey, destroying around 300 homes, melting cars and lighting up the sky from New York to Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, that loud and powerful explosion was met with a staggering level of inaction by the Department of Transportation’s Office of Pipeline Safety and its parent organization, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration or PHMSA.

Two decades and four reauthorizations later, PHMSA has made little progress. The shortfalls of the agency have drawn the attention of industry and safety advocates alike, as well as Democrats and Republicans.

I am deeply concerned about PHMSA’s inability to carry out its mission, numerous safety recommendations or Congressional mandates. Almost five years after the last reauthorization, it is especially troubling how many mandates that have yet to be implemented by the agency. Many of the outstanding requirements are critically important to safety, such as those dealing with operating pressure, leak detection and automatic or remote-controlled shutoff valves.

The lack of action on automatic and remote-controlled shutoff valves is particularly galling, considering the NTSB recommended expanded use of these damage prevention technologies 20 years ago! Even more troubling is the discovery that OMB is also to blame. Last night, the Committee inadvertently received a version of PHMSA's testimony that had been marked up by OMB. OMB's comments clearly show concern over being called out over this outrageous delay, asking whether PHMSA has "a planned response to a question about why this rule has been under EO 12866 review so long? If so, could you provide a summary of that response?" Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, we need to get OMB up here to explain to the American people and this Committee as to why they have held up these proposed rules for so long.

Progress must finally be made to help ensure the safety of our pipeline system. I would like to yield my remaining time to Mrs. Capps.

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