

Chairman Rush Opening Statement – “Safer Pipelines Act of 2019”
Energy Subcommittee
June 26, 2019

This morning we will be marking up HR 3432, the Safer Pipelines Act of 2019, a bill I introduced earlier this week.

As Chairman Pallone and I stated at last week’s hearing on the discussion draft, we want to work with the minority side on this bill and we will continue to do so even as we move forward between today’s Subcommittee markup and the Full Committee markup.

To be clear, the introduced bill before us today still represents a work-in-progress and we will continue to negotiate in good faith with the minority side to finalize a bipartisan bill that will eventually become law.

This issue of pipeline safety is not a Democratic or Republican one, as these pipelines traverse every district in the nation and ultimately impact every American.

So, it is extremely important that we get this right and put forth a bill that protects the lives and livelihoods of all citizens, as well as minimizes the risks to the environment.

As a show of good faith, we have agreed to strike sections from the discussion draft that were high priorities for myself, Chairman Pallone, and many of our Democratic Members.

Among these changes include deleting the section expanding the definition of regulated gathering lines, including all onshore gathering lines operating under a specified pressure.

We also agreed to the minority side’s request to strike the language regarding the “Grandfather Clause”, which exempts pipelines built before July 1970 from having to test for the Maximum Allowable Operating Pressure.

In addition, we also agreed to make changes to the section on Risk Analysis and Integrity Management Programs.

Instead of phasing out direct assessment entirely, in the current bill PHMSA will be required to issue regulations that prioritize assessing transmission pipelines in a way that would provide a greater level of safety than direct assessment.

This current draft also requires a report on methods of assessing distribution pipelines other than direct assessment to determine whether any such methods are feasible and would provide an equal or greater level of safety.

Additionally, each operator of a transmission pipeline facility in a high consequence area will be required to install automatic or remote shutoff valves, based on risk assessment and as appropriate, no later than two years after enactment of the bill, unless PHMSA finalizes a regulation on automatic or remote shutoff valves, as current law already mandates.

While each of these provisions are important to many Members of the majority party, we have agreed to take into account the concerns of our Republican colleagues so that we may move forward, working together as we have done on this issue in the past.

I also recognize that there are constructive, bipartisan provisions in both H.R. 2139, introduced by Mr. Trahan, Mr. Kennedy, and Mr. Moulton, as well as the Administration proposal.

As we move forward in the legislative process, I look forward to working with the minority side to incorporate sections from those two drafts that can receive support from both sides into this bill.

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.

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