

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**of**  
**Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security Ranking Member Diana DeGette**  
  
*Subcommittee Markup of 6 Bills*  
  
**March 6, 2024**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The PHMSA Office of Pipeline Safety is charged with regulating the safety of onshore pipelines in the United States. PHMSA sets the safety standards that pipelines must comply with and inspects interstate pipelines.

In 2020, Congress passed the PIPES Act of 2020, which reauthorized PHMSA's pipeline safety activities for three years. The safety provisions included in this Act are very important. They mandate the pipeline operators to carry out leak detection and repair programs on their own pipelines, require strengthened standards for the safety of LNG facilities, and expand safety requirements and regulations to nearly 500,000 miles of gathering pipelines.

As we know from past occurrences, pipelines are dangerous when neglected, and there are fatal incidents every year. On average, there are over 600 pipeline safety incidents each year, resulting in 31 injuries and 10 deaths.

In this legislation the Republicans are introducing, safety is not part of the formula. Committee Republicans allowed PHMSA's most recent pipeline safety reauthorization to expire months ago without taking any action whatsoever, and now they are trying to advance a reckless, partisan draft bill. They are abdicating their responsibility to protect the American people from dangerous pipelines.

The pipeline safety authorization bill enacted in 2020 expired last September. The Committee Republicans did nothing during their first year in the majority to re-authorize the program. The only thing Republicans have done is release their draft bill full of partisan poison pill provisions.

Ranking Member Pallone and I sent a letter to Chairs Rodgers and Duncan in September requesting that the Energy, Climate and Grid Security Subcommittee hold an oversight hearing of PHMSA's pipeline safety programs.

Republican's lack of action is a total departure from the typical bipartisan reauthorization process and is the complete opposite approach from how Democrats proceeded with PHMSA reauthorization four years ago when we were in the majority.

The Republican majority is not serious about pipeline safety, instead boasting that the bill will allow industry to build more pipelines. The funding in the Republican bill, the so-called

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“Pipeline Safety, Modernization, and Expansion Act,” would be a \$42 million cut below current authorized levels.

The funding authorized in the Republican bill is also significantly less than the authorization in the T&I bill, which proposed an average of \$80 million more each year for pipeline safety.

Meanwhile, Democrats have been focused on getting PHMSA the resources it needs. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provided \$1 billion for investments in the safety of natural gas distribution pipelines, and President Biden’s Fiscal Year 2024 budget requested a \$38 million increase for PHMSA’s pipeline safety budget.

The Republican bill contains multiple poison pill provisions that are completely unrelated to safety. One of these provisions allows the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to effectively overrule any other agency in the pipeline permitting process. Instead of pushing a partisan bill with giveaways to the fossil fuel industry that will not become law, Republicans should join us in developing a bill that prioritizes pipeline safety and ensures PHMSA has the staffing and resources necessary to implement its own mission.

Today, the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy is also marking up five anti-efficiency bills that would delay and weaken popular energy efficiency programs. Each of these bills are intended to gut the Department of Energy’s (DOE) ability to finalize and enforce efficiency standards related to different household appliances.

Each bill targets the energy conservation standards program established in the Energy Policy and Conservation Act (EPCA), which would impede DOE’s ability to finalize and enforce efficiency standards for clothes washers, dryers, refrigerators, dishwashers, and room air conditioners.

None of these bills have received a legislative hearing. Republicans are rushing action on them to stop DOE from improving Americans’ household appliances and score political points. These bills are simply bad-faith attacks on a program that is working to save Americans money and reduce emissions.

These bills will hurt the average consumer. Thanks to actions taken and planned by the Biden Administration, Americans will save \$570 billion and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 2.4 billion metric tons over the next 30 years. Newly proposed standards for water heaters alone could save households over \$200 a year.

And yet, Republicans are insistent on standing in the way of this progress.