

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.**

Hearing on “Keeping the Lights On: Enhancing Reliability and Efficiency to Power American Homes”

September 13, 2023

Energy efficiency is an important tool that lowers energy costs for American families, increases reliability, and helps us achieve our climate goals. It’s because of these benefits that bolstering and strengthening energy efficiency has long been a bipartisan priority of this Committee. That past bipartisan work helped produce the Department of Energy’s long and successful history of making our homes and businesses more energy efficient, saving consumers money and helping reduce energy consumption across the country. It’s unfortunate that energy efficiency is no longer a bipartisan issue and that we are here today to discuss three Republican bills that gut DOE’s ability to push for commonsense energy efficiency standards.

The three bills target DOE’s energy efficiency efforts, and limit other federal agencies from doing their jobs. Taken together, they are a radical departure from bipartisan, productive work on energy efficiency, and are designed to prop up industry and harm consumers.

The “DOE Appliance and Equipment Standards Reform and Consumer Protection Act” is an industry wish list masquerading as consumer protection. This bill adds duplicative and cumbersome standards and tests to DOE’s already-rigorous efficiency rulemaking process. If this bill becomes law, it puts all existing and future attempts at energy conservation into jeopardy.

H.R. 4167 is another dangerous bill that prohibits DOE from finalizing efficiency standards for electric distribution transformers. These standards promise significant energy savings – estimated to save consumers about \$15 billion. It ignores the very process that Congress created in the Energy Policy and Conservation Act and prevents DOE from doing its job by barring DOE from finalizing standards even if DOE finds that these standards will save Americans’ money and decrease energy usage.

And the “Guaranteeing Reliable Infrastructure Development Act” gives the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission an effective veto over any other federal agencies’ rules and regulations. This is an unprecedented power grab designed to thwart any progress in the energy sector in addressing emissions or efficiency. It would also allow state utility commissions to badger FERC and other federal agencies with potentially false claims about any proposed agency rule throughout the entire government. With these three bills, Committee Republicans are deliberately trying to delay and weaken popular energy efficiency programs to do the bidding of their polluter friends.

Once again, Republicans are putting polluters over people – and the American people are paying the price with higher energy bills.

It's clear Republicans want to return to the policies of the Trump years on energy efficiency. For four years, the Trump Administration sat on its hands and ignored the law, missing 26 different deadlines for efficiency standard determinations, including for distribution transformers. In order to play catchup, the Biden Administration has aggressively moved forward on past and planned energy efficiency actions that will save Americans \$570 billion. That's a lot of money, and unfortunately, these Republican bills would simply return us to a world where efficiency standards suffer from extreme delays. These actions will only increase energy costs for middle-class Americans and stifle our efforts to address the climate crisis.

At a time when House Democrats are focused on lowering costs for American families, House Republicans want to gut agencies that are trying to put dollars back in middle class Americans' pockets. And it's not just limited to these bills – they are supporting drastic funding cuts across the government. They want to cut DOE's Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy account by \$466 million. They want to repeal major energy-saving and emissions-reducing programs from the Inflation Reduction Act. These proposals are so extreme and severe that even their industry friends are pushing back. Earlier this month, industry groups and energy efficiency advocates came together to circulate a letter expressing serious concern with the drastic proposed cuts to vital DOE energy efficiency programs.

It's time that Republicans recognize that their misguided efforts to undermine energy efficiency standards only increase costs for American consumers and further hinder our ability to aggressively combat the worsening climate crisis. I wish we were able to come together and once again build on our past bipartisan work in this space, but it's clear that Republicans want to move in the opposite direction.