

Committee on Energy and Commerce

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

Hearing on “Strengthening American Energy: A Review of Pipeline Safety Policy”

July 22, 2025

It has been 661 days since the last pipeline safety reauthorization expired, so I am glad we’re here today, because there is a lot to talk about.

Pipeline safety risks are just as prevalent as ever, but since President Trump took office, enforcement actions against pipeline operators by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, or PHMSA, have fallen off a cliff. It’s not because pipelines have somehow magically gotten safer since January 20. Instead, it’s because the Trump Administration is once again prioritizing profits for their favored industries over the safety of the American people.

That’s why Trump’s forcing out the public servants that help to help keep our pipelines safe. Nearly all of PHMSA’s top staff have left the agency, and dozens of employees have either been forced out or been paid to leave. The Trump Administration is simply letting the agency bleed out talent that was vital to keeping Americans safe.

And the Trump Administration isn’t just haphazardly enforcing the law at PHMSA. Sometimes it’s not following the law at all. The last reauthorization — signed by President Trump — required that PHMSA issue a final rule improving leak detection in gas pipelines. PHMSA finalized that rule in January in the final days of the Biden Administration, but the Trump Administration clawed it back from the printers before it could be published. It did the same thing with a proposed rule on the safety for carbon dioxide pipelines, which was required by pipeline safety legislation over a decade ago.

PHMSA has even ignored basic transparency requirements that it publish monthly updates on its progress on finalizing rules and regulations required by law. All of this is clear – the Trump Administration has no interest in following the law.

That’s why it’s so important that this Committee work together on pipeline safety reauthorization — not just across the aisle here, but with our colleagues on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and the Senate Commerce Committee. We must ensure pipelines are safe and that the Administration and pipeline operators are following the law.

If Republicans want to pass a pipeline safety reauthorization package this Congress, I urge them not to follow the process that Committee Republicans used last Congress. Committee Republicans insisted on a legislative hearing and markup on a partisan bill that cut PHMSA’s authorized funding levels by nearly 20 percent and had several poison pill provisions completely unrelated to safety. They also refused to engage with the Transportation Committee on compromise legislation, and as a result, never even moved a bill to the floor.

In short, Republicans should not follow that same playbook. As we look to reauthorize the pipeline safety program, it’s important that we focus on safety. Committee Republicans should NOT try

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to gut bipartisan programs we established in our last bill. It is also critical that we give PHMSA the resources and tools we know it needs to keep us all safe.

Finally, because this is our first Energy Subcommittee hearing since Republicans passed their Big Ugly Bill, I want to briefly talk about the harm that bill will cause American families.

We heard testimony from countless Republican witnesses throughout the first half of this year, begging Republicans not to cut vital tax incentives for clean energy, or energy affordability programs from the Inflation Reduction Act. They also pleaded with Republicans to stay away from cutting the efforts by the Loan Programs Office to keep our energy competitive, especially looking at nuclear power.

Well, Republicans ignored all these experts' pleas. And now, as a result, power bills for American families will rise by up to \$400 per year, reliability will be undermined, the risk of blackouts will go up, and the climate crisis will get worse.

The Republicans cruel and dangerous energy agenda pickpockets working families to give handouts to the rich, including to Big Oil and Gas corporations who are among the only ones that stand to benefit from it.

And with that, I yield back the balance of my time.