

Select Committee on Economic Disparity and Fairness in Growth
Hearing on Connecting Americans to Prosperity: How Infrastructure can Bolster Inclusive Economic Growth
February 9, 2022
Mr. Neal Crabtree, Welding Foreman
Testimony

Thank you, Chairman Himes, Ranking Member Steil, and all Committee members for the opportunity to speak with you today.

As someone whose spent the last 25 years in energy infrastructure I've seen and been a working part of a major achievement for America. For decades this country relied on foreign governments for a lot of our energy needs and we often felt the effects of higher prices when groups like OPEC tighten supplies. Realizing the importance for energy independence, hundreds of thousands of men and women chose careers in this field and for the first time, America achieved that goal and has since been rewarded with lower energy cost for all. But, over the past year, the pain of higher fuel cost is returning and believe me, the pain is real. The only difference this time, its self-inflicted.

I realize most of today's Hearing will focus mainly on roads and bridges and rightful so, it's the one thing everyone can agree upon when it comes to infrastructure. But, just like our roads and bridges, the nations pipeline grid is aging. And just like roads and bridges need our attention, our pipelines need maintained, strengthened, and in some cases capacity added.

The great thing about the industry that's provided me with not just a job, but a career, is that most of our projects don't rely on government funding. Our projects are funded by the private sector and to me, that's the real definition of job creation. The government does however play a major role in the permitting process. Its this process that concerns me and millions of others working in and effected by this industry. It seems over the past few years the permit process has become more of a weapon used stop much need projects.

One example comes to mind is the Mountain Valley Pipeline. This is a 300 mile project that would provide reliable natural gas to the east coast. The project has been under development and construction for nearly 8 years now. No project should still be in court battles over permits after 8 YEARS! Instead of voicing all concerns during the planning stages, opposition groups chose to bring up concerns one at a time hoping to keep permits tied up in court until the financial cost is to big for companies to move forward. Many of the road and bridge projects will face this same opposition only this time it'll be taxpayer dollars wasted and amounts to our National Debt, as if 30 Trillion isn't enough.

As I said earlier, roads and bridges are often the selling point when it comes to infrastructure, but a Build Back Better Plan shouldn't mean the total neglect and destruction of our energy sector as we know it. There're some political leaders that's referred to fossil fuels as a dying industry but that's hardly the case. Two things happened last year that can prove my point.

#1. When the Colonial Pipeline was hacked, it affected the entire East Coast. 5 million in ransom was paid because we depend on it.

#2. To combat rising fuel cost, the President authorized the release of 50 million barrels of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. The President didn't access the Strategic Green Energy Reserve because it doesn't exist.

The country is entering dangerous territory if we keep neglecting our reliable forms of energy and setting deadlines for a Green Energy plan to take over that is nowhere near ready or capable of producing the amount of power it takes to run this country. My career and my industry aren't dying, we are however under attack and the battle is costing great jobs and causing unnecessary high energy prices being felt by all. We have set ourselves up to witness recording breaking fuel prices this summer and someone will have to answer for it. Americans with empty bank accounts over a problem that could have been avoided will show up on Election Day.