

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Markup of 17 Bills
February 24, 2016**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today we commence the markup of 16 bills related to energy and the environment and one communications bill as we look to build upon our proud record of success. Collectively, these bills advance our ongoing efforts to create jobs, boost America's small businesses and manufacturers, keep energy accessible and affordable, and strengthen energy security,

The majority of these bills have been bipartisan from the start, and the rest have become more so as we have had the chance to discuss them. I hope that this trend continues through this markup and that we can take a significant step toward advancing commonsense policies to benefit folks in Michigan and throughout the country.

Perhaps least controversial are the seven bills to extend the licenses for hydropower projects. Renewable hydropower is a critical component of our all-of-the-above energy strategy. These projects have been held up by red tape for so long that their FERC licenses will expire before construction can even begin. The bills extend the licenses and allow these projects to move forward, which will create jobs constructing and operating these hydropower facilities and provide affordable and reliable electricity to the communities they serve.

We also have two bills that will help contribute to a more effective and efficient FERC process and better service for electric ratepayers. A bill from Mr. Rush and Mr. Hudson focuses on energy workforce training and would redirect the federal government's energy job training programs to include more women and minorities that have been historically underrepresented in this sector. Mr. Pompeo's AIR Survey Act provides for the long-overdue use of aerial survey data in the natural gas pipeline approval process.

We'll also consider Mr. Johnson's BRICK Act to protect the brickmaking industry from costly EPA regulations that are the subject of legal challenges and that may not survive judicial review. As a matter of fairness and commonsense, brick makers should not have to undertake costly and potentially irreversible compliance measures – or possibly have to shut their doors and lay off workers – to comply with a rule that may not withstand judicial scrutiny. And the SENSE Act would make minor changes to EPA regulations that would enable coal refuse-to-energy plants to stay in business. Our work continues to protect the environment, jobs, and affordable energy.

Last but not least, we will consider a bill from the Communications and Technology Subcommittee that will protect small businesses from the burdensome enhanced transparency requirements that were part of the FCC's Open Internet Order. This bipartisan bill extends the FCC's temporary exemption from these requirements, and increases the threshold for defining a small business to better reflect the realities of the marketplace. I thank Chairman Walden and Mr. Loeb sack for their work to protect small businesses, ensuring that these companies are able to use their resources to provide service to consumers instead of dealing with Washington red tape.

The bills we will consider today exemplify the hard work of our members on both sides of the aisle to put forth thoughtful legislative solutions that advance our work on jobs, affordable energy, and make a difference at the local level.

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