

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Vote on H.R. 4978, H.R. 4641, H.R. 3680, H.R. 3691, H.R. 1818, H.R. 4981, H.R. 3250, H.R.
4969, H.R. 4586, H.R. 4599, H.R. 4976, H.R. 4982, H.R. 4889, H.R. 4167, H.R. 4111, H.R.
4190, H.R. 3998, H.R. 2031, H.R. 2589, H.R. 2592, H.R. 2593, and H.R. ___, Pipeline Safety
Act of 2016
April 26, 2016**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

The Energy and Commerce Committee has a rich tradition of working together to deliver results for the American people. I am proud of our bipartisan record of success this Congress –to date we have had 42 bills and provisions signed into law, and an additional 46 bills that have cleared the House and await Senate consideration. With this markup, we look to build upon that success as we consider 22 important bills that seek to address our country’s opioid and drug abuse epidemic, improve pipeline safety, prioritize public safety, and increase FCC transparency.

Half of the bills we will consider are aimed at addressing the opioid addiction epidemic that has hit too many communities and families across the nation. Opiate-related overdoses have become the number one cause of injury related to death in Michigan, as well as nationwide. Nearly every 12 minutes, someone dies of a drug overdose in the U.S. We’ve lost a lot of good kids in Michigan. It’s a frightening reality – and it’s only getting worse.

The bills before us today touch on the spectrum of issues driving the opioid crisis. While there is no one solution, these bills represent good steps in addressing a problem that has grown rapidly. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that nationally, nearly 260 million opioid prescriptions were written in 2012 – that’s one for every single U.S. adult with 20 million to spare. I’d like to thank my colleagues – both those on this committee and not – for working to advance these bipartisan bills that will make a real difference in our communities. I look forward to reporting these bills out of the committee this week, and continuing to work with House leaders on a bipartisan basis to ensure these bills move quickly to the House floor for consideration. We will also consider an important bill that passed the House last Congress to make it easier for our vets to translate the skills they have honed on the battlefield to working and volunteering on our EMT squads around the country.

Pipeline safety is also something that we should all take seriously and it’s been a priority of mine since I became chairman as we experienced a spill in Southwest Michigan that impacted the Kalamazoo River. While an incident can happen in an instant, the damage takes years to fix, underscoring the need for strong safety laws. We promised action, and today, I am proud to say that we have bipartisan agreement on a bill that authorizes PHMSA for five years and goes a long way in strengthening pipeline safety.

Since our subcommittee markup we’ve worked with our friends across the aisle to improve the bill. We’ve tightened provisions allowing PHMSA to issue emergency orders, we’ve included new sections to bring transparency to interagency reviews and the regulatory process, and study ways to protect pipelines from corrosion damage. Additionally, the bill will speed up the completion of overdue safety regulations, tighten standards for underground natural gas storage facilities, and increase inspections for some underwater oil pipelines. I should note that we are currently looking to finalize a manager’s amendment with the Ranking Member to address a few

small outstanding issues. We expect to circulate that amendment shortly after opening statements have concluded.

We also have nine bills that focus on updating and improving our communications laws to better serve all Americans. One of our most important tasks is ensuring our laws are working for contacting and assisting public safety operations. Whether it's dialing 9-1-1, providing tools to law enforcement, or promoting connectivity during disasters, several of today's bills are intended to improve the way Americans are protected in times of emergency. Among these bills is the Kelsey Smith Act, an important bill that will require telecommunications carriers to share location data if law enforcement believes someone is in danger or series harm. Twenty-two states have already implemented this law, and it's time we do it at the national level.

We'll also revisit the important issue of FCC process reform, one that this committee has long made a priority. We have three bills that have one simple goal: increase transparency at the agency. We've seen time and again that much of the agency's work occurs behind closed doors, with little public insight into the decision-making and operations at the FCC. This does not lead to good policy, and it does not create the kind of culture of accountability that consumers deserve. By requiring the FCC to publicly post work product, rule changes, and delegations of authority, industry regulates and the public alike benefit from increased visibility into the process.

Individually, each of these bills is important. Collectively, they speak to the hard work of our members on both sides of the aisle to enact meaningful solutions that truly make a difference for folks across the country.

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