



COMMITTEE ON
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DEMOCRATS
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Pallone's Remarks at Full Committee Markup of Autonomous Vehicles, Drinking Water, and Health Bills

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks at a Full Committee markup of legislation on autonomous vehicles, safe drinking water, and public health:*

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our full committee markup today will begin with legislation addressing self-driving vehicles. While I still contend that we did not need to rush this issue as we have over the last several weeks, I'm proud to say we have reached a bipartisan agreement.

I want to start by thanking Chairmen Latta and Walden and Ranking Member Schakowsky and their staffs for getting us to this point.

This bill is not perfect. I would have preferred no preemption provision but we were able to narrow it. The legislation also includes a phase-in period in the exemption section so that millions of exempted cars will not hit our roads all at once.

Moreover, we have ensured that the federal government's lead auto safety agency will be required to do rulemakings, and industry will be required to submit Safety Assessment Certifications. We insist that any manufacturer entering this market must have cybersecurity practices in place before their cars are sold. It also includes provisions that will protect drivers and passengers, including requirements to ensure kids are not forgotten in hot cars and that all new cars have the latest technology in their headlamps.

These are all important provisions, but there is still more work to do. We must still address an authorization of appropriations for the auto safety agency, which is not in the bill. And I still hope we can hear from NHTSA about how it would implement the bill's provisions. I am committed to getting this bill through the legislative process as long as we insist on safety being the top priority.

We will also mark up four bipartisan public health bills that will improve our ability to respond to critical health care issues and will provide needed resources to address ongoing public health concerns.

I will not support the fifth Health bill before us today – H.R. 772, the Common Sense Nutrition Disclosure Act of 2017 is not common sense. This bill would make significant changes to the menu labeling requirements passed as part of the Affordable Care Act that are intended to provide consumers with access to accurate nutritional information about their food when they're eating out. I remain concerned that FDA's final menu labeling rule has been delayed, and that this bill would only add to consumer and industry confusion. Many in the restaurant and food industry have already made significant investments to comply and this bill would only upend those efforts.

Finally, today we will mark up the Drinking Water System Improvement Act, which addresses many of the challenges facing communities nationwide who do not have confidence in the safety of their drinking water.

What are the concerns? Harm from lead and other contaminants. Water main breaks and crumbling infrastructure. Risks from hurricanes, droughts, and other extreme weather. Access to safe drinking water is essential to our health and prosperity as a nation, but it is far from guaranteed.

This bill will offer real funding and real tools to make our drinking water safer and to rebuild our drinking water infrastructure. I want to thank Chairmen Walden and Shimkus for working with the Democratic members of this Committee to craft and improve this legislation. And I want to thank Ranking Member Tonko for keeping the spotlight on drinking water issues and propelling this legislation forward.

When we held a legislative hearing on this bill in May, I said that we needed a bipartisan effort to reauthorize the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, or SRF. The Chairmen responded by working with us to improve this bill at Subcommittee and I look forward to improving it even further through today's manager's amendment. Once that amendment is adopted, this bill will address a broad range of drinking water issues.

The bill will take important steps to address the growing problem of lead in drinking water in homes and in schools. It includes funding to replace lead drinking fountains and will require EPA to assess, for the first time, the anticipated costs to replace our lead service lines nationwide.

It will take important steps to improve consumer information about drinking water quality, making consumer confidence reports more understandable, more accurate, and more frequent.

The legislation will also increase infrastructure funding to \$8 billion over five years, and will ensure a minimum level of assistance for disadvantaged communities, reflecting provisions from Mr. Tonko's AQUA Act.

Later today, I expect we will adopt a manager's amendment to address drinking water system security and resilience, consolidation to improve drinking water quality and compliance, and broader monitoring for emerging contaminants.

Safe drinking water need not be a partisan issue, and I am glad that today, it won't be. This is very important legislation, and I look forward to supporting it.

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