

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening State as Prepared for Delivery
of**

**Subcommittee on Environment, Manufacturing, and Critical Minerals
Ranking Member Paul D. Tonko**

***Hearing on “Unleashing American Energy, Lowering Energy Costs, and Strengthening
Supply Chains***

February 7, 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I strongly support this Committee’s efforts to examine and legislate ways to enhance our long-term energy security, affordability, and sustainability for the American people.

But unfortunately, nearly all of the bills before us today continue to look backwards, toward the energy needs of our past, rather than embracing the energy opportunities of the future.

And those opportunities are overwhelming about positioning the United States to become the global leader in the clean energy technologies and supply chains that will dominate the energy system over the next several decades.

We need our national energy policy to have vision. And that vision cannot solely be how to further enrich oil and gas companies, which are raking in record profits.

That is why we should be celebrating the Inflation Reduction Act’s nearly \$370 billion in clean energy and climate investments, which are already beginning to support the deployment of new clean energy resources, commitments in domestic manufacturing, and a significant reduction in climate pollution.

But sadly, two of the bills being considered today would repeal critical sections of the IRA, which were developed and enacted by the Democrats of this Committee in the 117th Congress.

The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund is going to facilitate historic investments to decarbonize our grid, transportation system, and buildings by supporting well-paying jobs and guaranteeing benefits in disadvantaged communities.

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And the Methane Emissions Reduction Program provides industry with significant funding to adopt emission-reducing technologies before using a market-based approach to incentivize pollution reductions.

This is a sensible program that provides certainty for industry while incentivizing the reduction of super pollutants from the oil and gas sector.

I am also concerned that several of the bills under consideration would create new loopholes in important environmental laws, allowing a broad and inadequately defined group of polluting industries to get fast-tracked for approval with little consideration for the potential harms they may pose to Americans' air, water, and safety.

This is not the way to achieve our shared goals of a more secure, affordable, and cleaner energy system.

But there are steps that we could take together that would.

We could have focused hearings to wrestle with complex energy issues— How should hydrogen pipelines be regulated? What reforms are needed to the hydropower licensing process?

How can we build more interstate and interregional transmission lines to improve the reliability and affordability of our electricity system while enabling greater deployment of cost-effective clean energy resources?

I suspect these questions may interest Members on both sides of the aisle.

And each of those topics could be the subject of a narrow, largely bipartisan hearing

. This approach would certainly require work and negotiations, but that is surely true of any serious effort to enact bipartisan energy legislation.

Unfortunately, the approach being offered today will not achieve this goal.

We are considering 17 Republican bills covering a wide range of topics and amending numerous statutes.

Several of these draft bills were seen for the first time a little over a week ago.

During the Democrats' time in the majority, we often tried to give our minority counterparts an opportunity to contribute to legislative hearings' agendas.

As far as I am aware, there were not discussions of potentially Democratic-sponsored bills that could have fit this hearing's theme.

I also expect we will hear criticisms of the Administration for failing to attend today.

I agree with my Republican colleagues that we should seek— and expect— to hear from the agencies at legislative hearings.

But we should also make efforts to accommodate their participation, including by providing legislative text well in advance and being flexible with the hearing calendar.

When the Republicans were last in the majority— during the Trump Administration— EPA did not testify at any legislative hearing in 2017 and only twice in 2018.

We should be consistent— both in our expectations that the Administration provide witnesses and technical assistance on legislation, and that we need to be flexible to accommodate schedules to ensure that their participation is well-informed and instructive to the development of legislation.

So, while I am disappointed in the process that has led us here today, I still believe there are bipartisan policies that we could work on together to achieve the goals of this hearing's title.

With that said, I look forward to the discussion on the 17 bills before us today, and I yield back.