

Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Hearing, “Making the Grade?: Audit of the Environmental
Protection Agency’s Clean School Bus Program.”
September 13, 2023
Opening Statement of Full Committee Chair Cathy McMorris
Rodgers

BROUGHT TO YOU BY PRESIDENT BIDEN

Thank you, Chair Griffith.

President Biden’s rush-to-green agenda is unaffordable, completely impractical, and is harming every-day Americans.

This was made clear from news that broke earlier this week about a multi-state “road trip” this summer, led by Secretary Granholm, which was intended to promote electric vehicles.

Here are just a few of the headlines from her trip:

- “Electric cars have a road trip problem, even for the secretary of energy”
- “On an EV road trip to promote green tech, the US Energy Secretary and her entourage couldn't find enough electric vehicle chargers”
- “Irate family called police on Jennifer Granholm's team for blocking charging station spot for her electric car”

Apparently, the Secretary’s staff discovered what we’ve known all along—most of the country lacks the necessary vehicle charging infrastructure for EVs, especially rural areas.

If President Biden's own Energy Secretary can't travel smoothly in an EV, how can this administration promise to ensure millions of children are able to get around in EV school buses?

CONCERNS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

As part of the administration's taxpayer funded spending spree to force EVs on Americans ...

...the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is trying to entice our school districts into adopting electric buses through its 5 billion-dollar Clean School Bus Program.

We should all be worried about the way the EPA is implementing this program.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) requires that 50 percent of the awards under this program are to be used for replacing existing school buses with *zero-emission school buses* that produce no emissions of any air pollutant or greenhouse gas.

The other 50 percent are to be used for replacing existing school buses with *clean school buses*, defined as a bus that reduces emissions and uses an alternative fuel—like propane—or is a zero-emission school bus.

Unfortunately, the EPA appears to be favoring unreliable and expensive electric school buses over clean school buses.

The federal government should not be in the business of picking winners and losers.

GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES AND THE EV MARKET

And what happens when the federal subsidies run out?

Will school districts be able to continue charging, maintaining, and repairing these expensive buses?

Will there even be a market for them without the federal government grants and rebates?

The fact is these vehicles are more expensive than traditional fleets...

...and limited charging infrastructure and operational limitations—especially as a result of extreme weather—make these buses completely impractical in many parts of the country.

The administration's forced EV transition will also make us more reliant on China, which dominates the EV battery market and the supply chains for critical materials necessary to build electric vehicles.

INSPECTOR GENERAL INVOLVEMENT

Earlier this year, the EPA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) launched an audit of this program to examine whether potential supply chain or production delays could negatively affect the agency's ability to distribute funds.

And this is just a part of the unprecedented \$102 billion dollars the EPA received from the IRA and the IIJA.

CONCLUSION

I had the opportunity to meet with Inspector General O'Donnell last month to discuss the challenges ahead and OIG's efforts to safeguard taxpayer funds against waste, fraud, and abuse.

I look forward to continuing that important discussion today.

Ensuring our children's safety should be the number one priority for any program looking to improve student transportation resources.

An unprecedented amount of taxpayer dollars was spent last Congress, and Americans deserve to know how it is being spent.

Beyond this program, I also have broader concerns with the EPA.

While EPA was created by an executive order, Congress never actually authorized the EPA, and apparently it still believes that it does not have to take direction from Congress.

I fear that it has replaced its core mission of protecting human health and the environment with a harmful political agenda to force an energy transition onto American families and businesses who will suffer.

I hope today's hearing will shed more light on this, which will ultimately help us restore accountability at the EPA.

Thank you. I yield back.