

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Ranking Member Yvette Clarke

Hearing on “Examining the Biden Administration’s Energy and Environment Spending Push”

February 26, 2025

I am honored to be sitting here for the first time as Ranking Member of this Subcommittee. Needless to say, conducting meaningful, fact-based, effective oversight is more important than ever. So it is baffling and concerning that we have on our witness panel representatives from not one, but two separate Inspector General’s Offices where the Inspector General was fired as one of Donald Trump’s first actions. And, these Inspectors General were both appointed by Donald Trump in his first administration. It is very telling that Donald Trump could not even trust people that *he himself appointed* to stay quiet while he and Elon Musk broke the federal government and violated the law.

We should be having a hearing on the illegal and unconstitutional steps that this administration has taken in its first month, but instead Republicans are beginning this Congress with an attempt to smear investments that are rebuilding domestic manufacturing and lowering costs for working families. Last Congress, the Republican majority held numerous similar hearings aimed at justifying cuts to crucial investments in our communities. And it seems they’re back at it again this Congress.

The hearing we *should* be having would examine how, in just over five weeks as president, Donald Trump has thrown our country into chaos. On his first day in office, Trump unconstitutionally froze federal spending across the federal government even though it is *Congress* that decides how federal money is spent, not the President. He has ignored numerous court orders requiring that funds be disbursed and he has empowered Elon Musk to make sweeping policy decisions at agencies Musk has a personal financial interest in undermining. He has also allowed hard-working career civil servants and their families to be arbitrarily swept aside under the guise of “efficiency” when we all know that there is nothing efficient about removing decades of hard-earned expertise and hollowing out agencies that protect our health and well-being.

We are already seeing the effects of this lawlessness. For example, one school district in Missouri that expected to have students riding to school on new, American-made electric buses is still waiting for their buses because of Trump’s funding freeze. That school planned to save millions of dollars by switching to electric buses. Instead, they now face higher costs and uncertainty about whether they will ever even receive the buses they ordered.

In West Virginia, a five-person nonprofit that had its award frozen was forced to lay off staff that transport seniors to life-saving dialysis appointments. Across the state-line in Virginia,

the funding freeze forced community health centers to close taking healthcare away from entire communities. Before the ink was even dry on Trump's funding freeze, hundreds of residents in Huntsville, Alabama, saw their energy bills jump by \$100 despite promises that direct financial assistance would not be affected.

Making matters worse, the Trump Administration has actively spread misinformation that exacerbates the chaos and confusion his funding freeze has created. For example, after the White House was ordered by the courts to lift its funding freeze, the Trump EPA issued an internal memo directing staff to unfreeze certain programs but has continued withholding funds under the pretense of "compliance reviews" in defiance of the court.

That is completely unacceptable. The investments Democrats fought for in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act are helping revitalize domestic manufacturing, end our reliance on critical mineral supply chains controlled by our adversaries, and create better-paying jobs for American workers. Thousands of American energy and manufacturing jobs are now at risk of disappearing and the promise of thousands of future jobs is fading.

Republicans have needlessly painted themselves into a corner, promising massive cuts to programs in order to pay for tax breaks for billionaires. To accomplish that, they have put our communities, our national security, American jobs, and a cleaner future with lower energy costs on the chopping block.

We in Congress have a duty to the Constitution and to our constituents. Committee Democrats are standing up for both by demanding that the will of Congress be followed and that programs benefiting our communities be implemented. Donald Trump and Elon Musk must be held accountable for the suffering they are inflicting on American workers and working families, and we cannot let them stand in the way of the better future that DOE and EPA programs are set to deliver.