

Testimony of Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
February 26, 2013

Chairman Whitfield, Ranking Member Rush, distinguished members of the Subcommittee on Energy and Power, thank you for the invitation to testify this morning. I appreciate your continued commitment to American energy security and innovation – and your decision to include energy efficiency in your discussion of these critical issues.

My interest in efficiency is drawn from three related roles. I am the Ranking Member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over the Department of Energy and its efficiency-related programs. I am a Senator for the great State of Alaska, the true energy capital of our nation, but also a place where some of our rural families are spending up to 47 percent of their income on energy. And finally, like everyone in this room, I am a consumer of energy – and therefore a beneficiary of all that it makes possible in our daily lives.

Before I delve into specific approaches on energy efficiency, I want to first offer some context for its place in a broad, rational, and coherent national energy policy.

Earlier this month, I released a blueprint entitled *Energy 20/20: A Vision for America's Energy Future*. It's the result of a year of thinking about the policies of the past and the trends we're now seeing. It's intended to provoke a new and more thoughtful discussion of energy, and to recognize how bright our future can be if we produce our resources and prioritize innovation.

Energy 20/20 is driven by a simple insight: energy is good. Energy provides the basis of modern society and allows us to lead happy and productive lives. It allows us to produce food, to manufacture and communicate, and to transport ourselves and our cargo around town and around the world.

Based on the observation that energy is good, I developed five key principles: we should strive to make energy abundant, affordable, clean, diverse, and secure. And to accomplish that, my blueprint – which I respectfully request be entered into the record of this hearing – offers some 200 recommendations, ranging from the immediate approval of the Keystone XL pipeline to an advanced energy trust fund that is paid for with the revenues from new production.

Please consider the recommendations in *Energy 20/20*, including the ones directed toward energy efficiency, but, more important, think of those five attributes – abundant, affordable, clean, diverse and secure – as a way to evaluate legislative actions that affect energy. I hope we can agree that, taken together, those are the attributes our energy policies must advance.

As your focus on American energy security and innovation reminds us, efficiency is more than just driving energy consumption down. As I said in my blueprint: “using energy more efficiently is akin to developing more fuel.” It also encompasses the more efficient production of energy.

I know that bringing this message here is somewhat like “taking coals to Newcastle.” But, as part of our efforts on energy efficiency, we must continue to discourage the inefficiencies that overreaching regulation is introducing into our energy supply chain. Our aim with efficiency policies should be to require less energy per unit of gross domestic product. And it is worth emphasizing that we want a rising GDP, as it is a measure of increasing prosperity.

To underscore for the discussion of efficiency: we must never lose sight of the fact that we want our nation – and the world, for that matter – to be more prosperous. As we know, prosperity is an aid to peace and human development, and energy is an aid to prosperity. So, as the title for today’s hearing reminds us, we must see efficiency in the context of energy security and innovation.

I am honored to be testifying today with my colleague, Senator Jeanne Shaheen, who was a leader on efficiency during her tenure on the Energy Committee, and continues to work with Senator Rob Portman on a new version of their comprehensive energy efficiency bill. It was and thankfully remains a bipartisan effort to make progress in an area where agreement is eminently possible. This was evidenced in the waning days of the 112th Congress, when we managed to pass an efficiency bill, the American Energy Manufacturing Technical Corrections Act, into law – with a total of just two members of Congress voting against it.

So where do we go on efficiency this year, as we look at ways to boost the efficiency of everything from our buildings and vehicles to our appliances and DVRs? The upcoming bill offered by Senators Shaheen and Portman will offer a promising path that is worthy of our consideration. Complementing their work are reports from private sector associations such as the Business Roundtable, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the Alliance to Save Energy. And we must continue to encourage outside stakeholders to reach voluntary consensus agreements, so that efficiency does not become synonymous with top-down mandates issued by the federal government.

Given the constraints on federal finances and the failure of mandates to deliver the promised results, those of us in the federal government should also put our own house in order. As a start, I will soon be calling upon the Government Accountability Office to review current funding and past performance of residential, commercial, and industrial energy efficiency programs at DOE – and then propose new authorization levels based on this review.

Finally, you have appropriately called attention with this hearing to *private sector successes and opportunities*. As President Reagan’s Administration reminded us more than 25 years ago, the greatest gains in energy efficiency come from the private sector in a growing economy. Here, the government’s priority should be the removal of barriers that stand in the way of their investments and the economic growth that makes them possible.

Thank you very much for providing me an opportunity to be part of this hearing. I am confident that I am joined by my colleague, friend, and Chairman Senator Ron Wyden when I say that our Committee looks forward to working with yours in this new Congress. Together, we can advance sound energy policy for the benefit of the American people.

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