

Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Whitfield
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Markup of H.R. 3826, the “Electricity Security and Affordability Act”
January 13, 2014

(As Prepared for Delivery)

In January 2008, then Senator Obama, in an interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle* editorial board said this in response to a question about his cap-and-trade plan, “If somebody wants to build a coal-fired power plant, they can. It’s just that it will bankrupt them. Under my plan ... electricity rates would necessarily skyrocket.”

In 2009, Congress debated regulating carbon dioxide emissions from power plants, which will drive up the costs of energy for Americans and have a huge impact on energy intensive industries. The cap-and-trade legislation ultimately failed in a Democratically controlled Senate.

A few months later, President Obama gave a speech at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference where he committed to a 17 percent reduction in CO2 emissions by 2020 and by more than 80 percent by 2050.

In a Nov. 2010, interview, when asked about regulating carbon dioxide emissions through some sort of administrative action, President Obama replied “Cap-and-trade was just one way of skinning the cat; it was not the only way. It was a means, not an end. And I’m going to be looking for other means to address this problem.”

Reportedly, on June 25, 2013, Daniel P. Schrag, a White House climate adviser and director of the Harvard University Center for the Environment, told the *New York Times* “The one thing the president really needs to do now is to begin the process of shutting down the conventional coal plants. Politically, the White House is hesitant to say they’re having a war on coal. On the other hand, a war on coal is exactly what’s needed.”

That same day, the president delivered a speech at Georgetown where he announced his Climate Action Plan and directed EPA to complete carbon dioxide emissions standards on new and existing power plants.

And, on September 20, 2013, EPA proposed, for a second time, regulations to control greenhouse gas emissions from new power plants.

Now, to look at the broader picture, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the United States “is home to the largest estimated recoverable reserves of coal in the world.” In the U.S. alone, coal accounted for 37 percent of electricity generation in 2012.

And, worldwide, coal is the predominant fuel used for electricity generation. Other countries such as Germany are building new coal plants. The U.S. Energy Information Administration projects coal-fired electricity generation to increase by 73 percent by 2040, with China and India alone accounting for 89 percent of the projected growth in coal-fired generation.

Despite all of this, I believe it is the goal of this administration to single out the use of fossil fuels in America. Cap-and-trade was rejected in 2009, and now this president is circumventing Congress and the American public by acting through executive order and regulation in an effort to eliminate coal-fired generation and fundamentally change our energy sector.

The legislation before us today takes a realistic approach to EPA’s proposed standards to regulate GHG emissions from power plants. We are simply saying that should the market allow for a new modern, state of the art, coal fired power plant to be built, that that option is still on the table. The legislation also aims to

protect the existing coal fleet and the thousands of jobs with it by allowing Congress to set the effective date of any regulation going forward.

Under EPA's proposal, industry would not even be able to build the most state of the art clean coal fired power plant, because the technology required under the proposed regulation is not commercially feasible. EPA testified before our subcommittee that the proposal is based on four demonstration projects – all of which rely heavily on government subsidies and it remains unclear when or if all of these projects will go forward. In fact, there is not one full-scale commercial power plant with CCS in operation anywhere in the world today.

This legislation allows for us to bring these proposed regulations to the forefront and have a public debate about the effect that they will have on jobs, energy costs, and economic growth. Ultimately, I believe that the consequences of these regulations will trickle down to the consumers, whether a family or a business, in the form of higher electricity costs. Americans deserve energy that is affordable and reliable. We need to keep a diverse energy portfolio, one that is truly “all of the above.”

I urge all of my colleagues to stand with me in keeping baseload electricity that is secure and affordable in our energy mix- support HR 3826, the *Electricity Security and Affordability Act*.

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