

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Whitfield**  
**Subcommittee on Energy and Power**  
**Hearing on H.R. 4526, the “21st Century Energy Workforce**  
**Development Jobs Initiative Act of 2014”**  
**September 17, 2014**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

This morning’s hearing focuses on H.R. 4526, the 21st Century Energy Workforce Development Jobs Initiative Act of 2014. I am particularly pleased to work with my friend Bobby Rush who introduced this important bill to increase minority participation in the rapidly expanding energy jobs market.

The dramatic increase in domestic oil and natural gas production could not have come at a better time for this nation’s struggling economy. As a result of America’s oil and gas boom, energy is one of the very few sectors of the economy where we have seen substantial job growth in recent years. And these jobs pay very well – in fact, it has been reported that graduates of the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology are commanding higher salaries than graduates of Harvard.

And these are careers for the long haul. The Energy Information Administration and others predict continued increases in domestic oil and gas output in the years ahead, and that translates into growing demand for qualified employees to produce that energy. Many of the nation’s fastest growing state economies are energy-producing states, and that is not likely to change any time soon.

People with the right training will be needed in ever greater numbers - from the geologists and engineers who use state-of-the art-technology to find the oil and natural gas, to those who drill and operate the wells, to those who design and build and maintain the specialized equipment that makes it all possible, and many others. And beyond the oil and gas boom, there are all the jobs related to coal, nuclear, and renewables. There are over 800,000 jobs in the U.S. supported by the coal mining industry. Many of these jobs provide excellent salaries and opportunities for upward-mobility for minorities living in some of the most impoverished corners of our country, specifically for Native Americans. For example, the Chairman of the Crow Nation, the tribal nation in Montana, has testified before congress that the importance of coal mining “to the economy of the Crow Reservation cannot be overstated.” We must remember this fact and encourage and develop energy jobs of all types.

There is no doubt that the energy industry offers many promising careers for young people, and we need to make certain that these opportunities exist for all Americans, including African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and women. And that is what H.R. 4526 does. It improves upon the federal government’s existing education and job training programs by ensuring that more women and minorities can acquire the skills needed to get energy industry jobs.

Of course, I might add that these job opportunities only exist to the extent that we are allowed to produce energy in this country. For that reason, we need to remain vigilant against restrictive policies such as those that limit fossil fuel production from federal lands. And we absolutely must allow coal to remain a significant part of the energy mix to preserve and expand coal-related jobs. The same is true of nuclear power, which faces numerous federal roadblocks. In addition, we should support legislation that expands global markets for American energy, such as H.R. 6, the “Domestic Prosperity and Global Freedom Act.” Simply put, more American energy production equals more American jobs. Tomorrow on the House floor, we will be debating an energy bill that reduces red tape, helps to extend our energy infrastructure for greater access to supplies, promotes production, and most of all will help to expand these jobs that we refer to in H.R. 4526.

While we pursue policies that expand the energy jobs pool, we also need to take steps to help minorities and women fill more of these positions. H.R. 4526 is a vital step forward in achieving this goal. I look forward to working with Mr. Rush to assure its passage.

###