

Opening Statement of the Honorable Joe Barton
Before the House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Energy and Power

Hearing on the discussion draft entitled “Title II: 21st Century
Workforce”

Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased that we are beginning our discussions with an area I believe we can all embrace and that is jobs and the economy. My colleagues Mr. Flores, Mr. Green, Mr. Hudson, and Mr. Rush have worked in a bipartisan manner to bring this issue to the forefront.

Earlier this week it was reported in a Wall Street Journal blog that while the US economy continued to add jobs last month, states that rely heavily on the oil industry experienced significant cuts.

- Texas has lost 25,400 jobs
- Oklahoma has lost 12,900.
- North Dakota has lost 3,000.
- All told, 31 states and Washington, D.C., saw a drop in employment in March, and only 18 states saw employment rising.

Michael Feroli, the chief U.S. economist for J.P. Morgan Chase JPM, said Monday that the scale of job losses in Texas is so large that the state may be in recession.

The purpose of the bill before us is to direct the Secretary of Energy to establish and carry out a comprehensive program to improve education and training for energy and manufacturing-related jobs in order to increase the number of skilled workers trained in energy and manufacturing fields. That is a great goal.

Of particular interest to me are the provisions creating a clearinghouse because this could potentially streamline the process for those seeking training and help eliminate duplication. In light of the recent downturn in my home state, I also strongly support the provision that directs the Secretary to give special consideration to increasing outreach to unemployed energy workers.

Although it is not the subject of this hearing, I do believe I have part of the solution to the downturn in jobs. I have proposed legislation to get rid of the ban on crude oil exports. I believe that simple act alone could greatly help our producers reverse the trend of job loss. I'm happy to discuss this with anyone who would like to.

Again, I appreciate all the work that has gone into this draft legislation and I look forward to working on the entire package of the Architecture of Abundance.