

Statement of Chair Bobby Rush (as prepared for delivery)
Hearing on “The State of Pipeline Safety and Security in America”
E&C Subcommittee on Energy

May 1, 2019

I want to thank you all for attending this very important hearing today on pipeline safety and security, and I want to welcome all of our distinguished witnesses that will be appearing before us on two separate panels.

I also want to express my disappointment and concern that we will not be hearing from one of the major agencies responsible for the oversight of pipeline security, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) who actually preside over some the most disturbing outstanding issues that need to be addressed.

While we did invite TSA to appear before us today, so Members could address many of the issues that were spelled out in a December 2018 GAO report, they declined to send a witness, which I find to be unacceptable and must be addressed moving forward.

In the meantime, I look forward to engaging with the panelists that are here, to examine the state of pipeline safety and security as it currently stands.

I have the pleasure of representing portions of Will County as part of the First Congressional District of Illinois.

Will County accounts for 8-percent of all pipelines in my state, and officials there were able to provide my office with critical insight into how pipeline safety and security protocols play out on the local level.

As we all know, local communities are always the ones most directly impacted when something goes wrong, as we’ve unfortunately witnessed far too often in areas extending from the Merrimack Valley in Massachusetts to Aliso Canyon and San Bruno in California.

From county first-responders who are usually the initial actors on the scene, to local Emergency Management Agencies (EMA) who are required to participate and carry out emergency preparedness exercises to plan and prepare for disasters, local agencies play a large role in helping to mitigate disasters and they are not always provided the adequate funding or resources to do so.

Many times, when private companies are mandated to comply with Consent Decrees, they pull in local resources such as was the case with a recent spill in Romeoville, Illinois.

Will County officials were required to contribute many hours of manpower and staff in order to help Enbridge meet its court-ordered decree but were not compensated any money for the role they played.

While there is the Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) grant program, it appears that there are some severe limitations with this program.

The HMEP, like the Technical Assistance Grants, or TAG program operates with limited and unpredictable levels of funding and has burdensome restrictions on how the funding may be used.

So I look forward to working together with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, as we have done in the past, to examine the different types of grant programs available.

It is important that we look at all of the different funding mechanisms at our disposal in order to make sure that we are providing our first-responders, emergency management agencies, and all of the other critical state and local stakeholders with the resources they need to effectively do their jobs and keep all of the nations' pipelines, and the communities they traverse, safe and secure.

With that I yield the balance of my time, and now I would like to recognize my friend and colleague, Ranking Member Upton for his opening statement.

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