

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**of**  
**Representative Tony Cárdenas**

***Field Hearing on “American Energy Expansion: Improving Local Economies and Communities’ Way of Life”***

**February 16, 2023**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was shocked by the title of today’s hearing, “American Energy Expansion: Improving Local Economies and Communities’ Way of Life.” It implies that improving local economies and communities’ way of life is a priority for the Majority.

I strongly support this Committee taking *honest* steps to do that through energy policy. But today’s hearing isn’t an honest exploration of how to achieve these goals. What’s particularly surprising is that Republicans are attempting to make a case for the fossil fuel industry by holding today’s hearing near a community that was poisoned by the fossil fuel industry and is struggling to fix the major environmental damage left from decades of drilling.

But, if my Republican colleagues want to use the Permian Basin and its pipeline network as an example of what fossil fuel expansion will look like, then let’s have that conversation:

In 2017, Kinder Morgan announced its Permian Highway Pipeline would be routed through the Texas Hill County. Despite citizens protests and the lawsuits filed, construction of the pipeline began.

In March 2020, an accident during construction caused about 36,000 gallons of drilling fluid to spill. It contaminated the ground water, which was local families only source of drinking water, with high levels of lead and hazardous drilling fluid that is “regarded as carcinogenic to humans.” Is polluted drinking water and a disregard for public input *really* my Republican colleague’s idea of improving communities’ way of life?

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle have not come here to tell the whole story. They have omitted the human and environmental costs of expanding fossil fuel production and gas pipelines. They have left out the devastating impacts that projects, like the Permian Highway Pipeline, can have on clean water, people, and the planet. They have proven, once again, that they are willing to sacrifice the well-being of the American people, so that Big Oil executives can get rich. And, conveniently, they have brought forth three witnesses who all either own or operate oil and gas companies.

Let me be clear: today’s hearing is a Republican messaging exercise. This isn’t about improving or protecting communities’ way of life, it’s about expanding an industry that is

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exacerbating the very issues my colleagues claim that they want to fix. We *can* protect energy security, cut costs for families, improve local economies, and advance homegrown clean energy, not only without risking the well-being and health of our constituents, but improving it. And it's shameful that my Republican colleagues refuse to commit to that.