

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security Ranking Member Diana DeGette

Markup of 17 Bills

October 24, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Duncan. We are here today to consider legislation intended to address some of the issues we are seeing in industries across the energy sector. But, I have to say, pushing forward with hearings and markups to pretend it is business as usual when today marks three weeks that the House has been without a speaker, is troublesome. Many of the bills we are considering today have not been officially introduced.

And even if they were introduced at this very moment, they would not be able to be referred to our subcommittee to be considered. So, I want the record to reflect that the House is currently in disarray and this chaos is undermining our ability to govern. But now to focus on the content of our markup. As the world moves toward a clean energy transition, we must consider legislation that allows the United States to continue on that path and enables us to continue leading the world.

As we all know, nuclear energy currently makes up nearly 20 percent of the electricity we generate in the United States. And it has the potential to supply a significant portion of our power, as long as we continue to prioritize public health and safety. Nuclear energy is a subject this subcommittee has enjoyed bipartisan support for, which is important in this current climate.

I am proud of the work this subcommittee has done to come together and support the nuclear energy sector and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which is vital as the leading safety regulator of nuclear energy and materials. Supporting the NRC's workforce is important to the success and security of the industry. And the NRC needs all available tools to ensure it has the full workforce it needs to complete its work.

This is why I am proud that we are considering a bill I introduced, the Strengthening the NRC Workforce Act of 2023. I would like to note that this is the first Democrat-led bill being marked up by this subcommittee this Congress. This bill, simply put, would allow direct hiring authority for the chairman of the NRC when there are candidate shortages or when there is a critical need to fill certain positions. It would also allow the NRC to help retain staff by increasing their compensation, among other things.

The bill has been updated to reflect witness testimony from our hearing and incorporates some provisions of the Senate version of the bill, which I will highlight later in the markup. Unfortunately, some of the bills the majority has put forward were not updated to reflect our concerns. Reliable electricity is one of the most important aspects of Americans lives, and energy efficiency can help ensure reliability. But the majority's bills we are considering today are instead focused on gutting energy efficiency standards.

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They would roll back progress we have made on energy efficiency – despite the fact that these efficiencies help us avoid taxing our grid and save consumers money. I struggle to understand this hyper-fixation on undoing standards that are lowering energy costs for families across the nation. Finally, we are considering Chairwoman McMorris-Rodgers' Hydropower Clean Energy Future Act.

Like regulations around nuclear energy, hydropower has had a history of bipartisan support in this Committee and Congress. And I am supportive. We need to prioritize investment to encourage new hydropower and retain existing dams, while also ensuring we minimize the environmental impacts. So, I am excited about the potential that hydropower has to offer, but I have concerns about this specific bill. It looks to undercut important environmental laws by creating significant exemptions for the hydropower licensing process, which is not something I can get behind. The majority's unwillingness to work together on hydropower legislation has continued to be disappointing.

I look forward to finding areas of common ground and supporting bipartisan legislation throughout this markup. But I am frustrated with some of the bills being considered, and I continue to emphasize my desire to work in a bipartisan fashion for the good of this subcommittee and the American people. Thank you, and I yield back. at the government is somehow coming for your gas stoves. Let me be clear: the Department of Energy is not going to ban your gas stove. Full stop. The Dept. of Energy's energy efficiency rules – that it's required by Congress to put in place – cover both gas and electric stoves. They also apply only to new products – and, in no way, will affect the stove you currently own.

In fact, more than half of all gas stoves on the market today already comply with the rule being proposed and would still be fully available to consumers across the country. So, let's tone down the rhetoric on this one. Instead of getting the American people ginned up on a bogus issue, let's focus on the long list of issues that do need to be addressed. Finally, the third bill we have before us today, H.R. 3277, will elevate the head of the Office of Cybersecurity to an assistant secretary level position. This is a bill that was previously passed out of the committee by a voice vote last Congress, and I expect it will do so again today.

Thank you, and I yield back