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Pipefitters Local 208, Denver, Colorado**

**Hearing on Powering America's Future: Unleashing American Energy  
Before the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Energy**

**February 5, 2024**

My name is Gary Arnold and I am the Business Manager of Pipefitters Local 208, based in Denver, Colorado. Local 208 represents over 1,900 hard-working American craftspeople, a great many of whom play a vital role in building and maintaining the energy infrastructure of Colorado and other states. Local 208 is an affiliate of the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the United States and Canada, AFL-CIO ("UA"), which, in total, represents over 384,000 craftspeople in the pipefitting and related industries. In addition to serving as Business Manager of Local 208, I serve as a UA International Vice President. The UA takes great pride in offering the American people and our business partners the highest-skilled and best-trained energy workforce in the world. Our members can be found on almost every type of energy project in the country, including oil, gas, nuclear, hydrogen, biofuels, geothermal—to name just a few.

Chairman Latta, Ranking Member Castor, it is an honor to appear before the Committee to discuss a cause that is near and dear to the hearts of our members and me: unleashing American energy.

Let me begin with some background on myself. I have served as Business Manager of Local 208 since 2017. In addition to holding this post, and that of UA International Vice President, I serve as the Business Manager of Rocky Mountain Pipe Trades District Council 5, which is focused on coordinating efforts and initiatives of the UA community in the states of Colorado and Wyoming.

Education and training have always been a passion of mine and I have been pleased to pursue that passion in multiple capacities. As a Trustee of Local 208's Joint Apprenticeship

Training Committee (JATC), I work to develop educational standards, curriculum, operations, and funding to improve apprenticeship training, journeyman continuing education, and specialized training programs. I have also supported our Registered Apprenticeship Program for 3 years as its Head Training Director and for 8 years as a Program instructor. In addition, I contribute to training initiatives for the State of Colorado in multiple ways, including as Chairman of the State's Apprenticeship Council.

While I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to serve in the leadership positions mentioned above, I am, at my core, a proud American pipefitter and I know first-hand the life-changing opportunities these careers provide. The knowledge and skills I obtained through my union apprenticeship have given me the opportunity to pursue a career contributing to the betterment of my community, state and country while earning family-supporting wages and health and retirement benefits. For over 14 years, I worked as an industrial/commercial pipefitter, building and maintaining critical infrastructure upon which our economy and citizens depend, including energy facilities like the Cherokee Generating Station, a natural gas power plant located approximately 1.5 miles from Local 208's union hall.

Today, the members of Local 208 are performing or preparing for numerous important energy projects. This work includes but is not limited to the installation and maintenance of gas distribution pipelines for several companies throughout the states of Colorado and Wyoming, construction of two new simple cycle gas-fired power plants, and pipe fabrication and maintenance and repair work at multiple midstream oil and gas processing plants and compressor stations.

Our members are among the best of America. They work extremely hard to support themselves and their families, pay their bills, save a little bit for retirement, and, on occasion, enjoy some well-earned leisure time. They care deeply about their community and country. They are

the type of folks who coach little league teams, volunteer for charitable endeavors, and will respond to a neighbor's call without hesitation or asking for anything in return. And, for the most part, we favor fact-based, common-sense approaches to real world problems, including energy.

Like most Americans, our members want energy that is affordable, reliable, American-made, and safe for their families and communities. They support efforts to make the energy we produce cleaner. Why wouldn't we? Local 208 members, like UA members across the country, live in the communities where our energy projects are built. However, they take exception to being asked to suffer lost job opportunities, higher energy prices, and outages because of opposition to projects from fringe groups rooted in scare tactics and unrealistic solutions to real-world energy demands.

Our members also want to see America lead on energy. They have a difficult time understanding, for example, why it takes several years to permit a natural gas pipeline in a country that is sitting on enormous natural gas reserves and seeing steep increases in electricity costs. They struggle to comprehend why many still resist the expansion of nuclear energy when we've used nuclear energy for more than a half century without a single injury or fatality and when nuclear energy produces more electricity using less land than any other clean energy source. And they have a difficult time understanding how groups purporting to be focused on reducing emissions are having success undermining carbon capture projects that would make existing power plants and industrial facilities substantially cleaner.

To unleash American energy, we must speed up the project approval process and reduce the needless uncertainty and costs that energy companies and consumers are being asked to endure. The process for permitting new coal-fired plants in China takes months, while, in the United States, it takes us several years to obtain approvals to capture carbon from existing coal-fired plants. This

is not to say that we should adopt China's permitting laws. However, it is clear that we must move much faster on permitting and reduce the ability of fringe groups to leverage seemingly endless chokepoints to punish companies for undertaking projects to build the energy infrastructure we need.

For these reasons, I am very encouraged by President Trump's Executive Order entitled "Unleashing American Energy."<sup>1</sup> The President's Executive Order requires federal agencies to review and address regulations and policies that burden the development and use of domestic energy, "with particular attention to oil, natural gas, coal, hydropower, biofuels, critical mineral, and nuclear energy resources." In addition to the sources cited in the President's Order, particular attention should be paid to geothermal, blue hydrogen (produced from natural gas and captured carbon dioxide), and carbon capture and sequestration technologies—all of which are showing great promise and can significantly enhance our energy security. Moreover, the President's Order will help to ensure that federal permitting reviews are conducted in strict accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and that superfluous regulations and protocols are eliminated. Many of these measures enjoy broad bipartisan support in Congress.

The actions taken by President Trump to resume processing export permit applications for new liquefied natural gas projects are also welcome. Our country's vast natural gas reserves give us the ability to deliver ample LNG both to consumers domestically and to our allies abroad. As a major producer of natural gas that has more than it needs, Colorado is well-positioned to take advantage of a West Coast LNG facility. If we can construct additional pipelines to connect existing pipelines heading westward, we will be able to take full advantage of getting Colorado's natural gas to markets that are currently inaccessible to us.

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<sup>1</sup> Executive Office of the President [Donald J. Trump]. Executive Order 14154: Unleashing American Energy. 20 January 2025. *Federal Register*, Vol. 90 No. 18, pp. 8353-8359, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2025-01-29/pdf/2025-01956.pdf>.

As the Congress seeks to support these and other initiatives to invigorate the U.S. energy sector, our members strongly urge you to build upon the Inflation Reduction Act (“IRA”) and other laws that are moving the ball forward on energy in important respects. For example, the IRA includes tax credits, loan guarantee authority, and research to support the expansion of nuclear energy. In addition, the IRA’s expansion of the Internal Revenue Code Section 45Q tax credit has led to a surge in development and installation of carbon capture and sequestration systems. These systems will make it possible to extend the life of, or save, existing coal and other plants that might otherwise be shuttered. Plant closures can be devastating for communities, depriving them of desperately-needed jobs, tax revenue, and other vital economic impacts. The carbon captured by these systems can also be repurposed for various uses, including enhanced oil recovery and concrete production.

As we speak, there are carbon capture projects being considered throughout the United States, including in northern Colorado. With the support of the White House and the Congress, we can maximize the economic and energy security benefits that those opportunities provide.

As the members of this Committee work legislatively to unleash American energy, we will be working to unleash the training needed to build those projects safely and to the highest-quality standards. Local 208 and our contractor partners invest about \$2 million each year in apprenticeship and journeyman upgrade training. These are 100% private dollars. We don’t ask for a dime from the taxpayer. Local 208’s training program has 50 part-time instructors who teach apprentices in the evenings after work, along with another 10 instructors we’ve retained in collaboration with industry partners. The UA as a whole invests over \$300 million per year in apprenticeship and journeyman upgrade training at more than 300 training centers located in every state. The total investment across the building trades and our private sector partners exceeds \$1 billion. These investments make it possible for us to deliver cutting-edge training at virtually zero cost to participants, and to build and

sustain the most well-trained and -skilled workforce in the country, ensuring the integrity of our projects, the safety of our workers, and the best possible work product for our clients. The careers supported by these investments—which allow Americans to provide for themselves and their families without taking on massive amounts of debt—should be celebrated and protected.

In our industry, every project is an opportunity to deliver important on-the-job training to apprentices that will produce more qualified journeyman workers for future projects. With your support in unleashing American energy and giving our members the opportunity to build more projects, we can expand our training programs and produce even more qualified workers to meet the needs of future projects. And, unlike some in our industry, we don't look to foreign countries—or even other parts of the country—to staff projects. We utilize local referral systems that provide opportunities to workers in the area where the projects are being built. In addition, as more work becomes available, we recruit and train people from within the local community to man that work. We believe, as we know you do, that, if there is a project in your district, local workers should have the opportunity to build it. Through programs like the UA's award-winning Veterans in Piping Program, we also work to ensure that our military veterans have those opportunities as well.<sup>2</sup>

As I indicated earlier, unleashing American energy isn't just important for our national and energy security—it is also important for the economic security of our country, communities, and working families. Many of the projects we are talking about provide life-changing opportunities to hard working Americans—and the UA has been proud to be a part of delivering those opportunities.

One example of the life-changing opportunities these projects provide can be found in Vernon Parish, Louisiana. In the summer of 2023, the UA partnered with CapturePoint to deliver

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<sup>2</sup> United Association Veterans in Piping (VIP) Program, 31 Jan. 2025, [www.uavip.org](http://www.uavip.org).

career and technical training to high school juniors and seniors in the Parish, in connection with CapturePoint’s development of the Central Louisiana Regional Carbon Storage Hub, which will store and sequester millions of tons of carbon dioxide each year. Under an agreement between the UA, CapturePoint and the Vernon Parish School Board, the UA is delivering training in the pipeline and plumbing industries, including in the carbon capture work to be done at the new hub, to a part of the country where job opportunities are lacking. The UA and CapturePoint committed hundreds of thousands of dollars in private funding to provide training classrooms and workshops, instructors, and transportation for students—all with the goal of ensuring that the next generation of Louisiana workers can take advantage of the job opportunities arising in their backyards.<sup>3</sup>

Closer to home, in Pueblo, Colorado, we are in the midst of a high-stakes discussion about mitigating the loss of the Comanche 3 Coal-Fired Power Plant in 2031. According to polling, 63% of Pueblo residents are concerned about the loss of Comanche 3—and rightly so, given that Comanche 3 is an economic staple of the Pueblo community, with a total annual impact of over \$196 million a year.<sup>4</sup> The losses of jobs, businesses and tax revenue will hurt the Pueblo community for decades, at least unless there is a strong plan in place to replace the economic engine Comanche 3 currently provides. After studying various options to replace Comanche 3, the Pueblo Innovative Energy Solutions Advisory Committee recommended that Xcel Energy, the owner of Comanche 3, look closely at constructing advanced nuclear units, including small nuclear modules. Not only would the energy produced be zero-emissions, it would also create 200-300 jobs with a salary range of \$60,000-\$200,000, along with annual tax payments of \$95.29 million.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Carbon Action Alliance. “Telling the Vernon Parish Carbon Management Story (Video).” *YouTube*, 8 Feb. 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmGvS7Jj0y0>.

<sup>4</sup> Koehler, Corinne, et al. “Pueblo Innovative Energy Solutions Advisory Committee Report,” 2024. p. 2. <https://www.xcelenergy.com/staticfiles/xe-responsive/Archive/PIESAC%20Written%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Koehler, Corinne, et al., pp. 3-4.

Let me close by thanking the Committee for holding a hearing on the tremendously consequential topic of unleashing American energy. Thank you.



## **GARY ARNOLD - ONE PAGE SUMMARY OF MAJOR POINTS**

- Local 208 and the UA takes great pride in offering the American people and our business partners the highest-skilled and best-trained energy workforce in the world.
- Our members favor a fact-based, common-sense approach to energy. We want energy that is affordable, reliable, American-made, and safe. We support efforts to make the energy we produce cleaner. However, we take exception to being asked to suffer lost jobs, higher energy prices, and outages because of irrational opposition to projects from fringe groups.
- Our members also want to see America lead on energy. We have a difficult time understanding, for example, why it takes several years to permit a natural gas pipeline in a country that is sitting on enormous reserves and seeing steep increases in electricity costs.
- To unleash American energy, we must speed up the project approval process and reduce the needless uncertainty and costs that energy companies and consumers are being asked to endure. For these reasons, I am very encouraged by President Trump's Executive Order entitled "Unleashing American Energy," which advances these objectives.
- Our members strongly urge the White House and Congress to build upon the Inflation Reduction Act and other laws that are moving the ball forward on energy.
- As the members of this Committee work legislatively to unleash American energy, we will be working to unleash the training needed to build those projects safely and to the highest-quality standards. Local 208 and our contractor partners invest about \$2 million each year in apprenticeship and journeyman training. These are 100% private, non-taxpayer dollars.
- Unleashing American energy isn't just important for our national and energy security—it is also important for the economic security of our country, communities, and working families.