

Additional Questions for the Record and Responses From Ben Lieberman

The Honorable Brett Guthrie (R-KY)

1. In Kentucky, homeowners using gas for heating save \$610 annually as compared to all-electric alternatives, and the state has protected energy choice in statute. What happens to costs, whether reflected in utility bills or appliance prices, when a consumer's energy choice is prioritized?

According to the Department of Energy, natural gas is 3.5 times cheaper than electricity on a per unit energy basis, so eliminating this choice for homeowners would undoubtedly raise energy bills. These rules usually raise appliance prices, and it is not clear if consumers will ever recoup these higher costs in energy savings. Further, the choice between gas and electric appliances should always rest with the homeowner, and not be decided through government policy.

The Honorable Randy Weber (R-TX)

1. How important is it to consider a consumer's return on investment when developing appliance energy efficiency standards?

Energy efficiency is something that can get taken to a foolish extreme, and that is what we often get with federal regulatory mandates. Appliance rules that raise the up-front cost more than is likely to be earned back in energy savings are net losers for consumers and must be avoided. Not only do these rules raise appliance prices, but they also reduce reliability and product lifetimes, adding to repair and replacement costs. It is critical to take all costs into account and refrain from regulations that cost consumers on net.

2. What EPCA reforms are needed to ensure that future standards are technologically feasible and economically justified?

One critical reform is to allow the agency to revisit past standards that have proven costlier than anticipated, and either change or repeal them.

3. What are your thoughts on revising certain definitions to base them on full fuel cycle calculations rather than site-based energy?

The definitions must not favor one fuel source over another. For example, the losses between an electric utility and the end user should not be ignored in order to favor electricity over natural gas.

The Honorable Julie Fedorchak (R-ND)

1. You observed that DOE is effectively using appliance regulations to discourage natural gas use at home; for instance, proposing standards that hit gas stoves harder in favor of electric versions. This is despite EPCA's clear prohibition on forced fuel switching.

a. How do such anti-gas regulatory moves impact consumer utility bills and choice?

Gas is cheaper than electricity on a per unit energy basis, so disfavoring it via regulation adds to consumer utility bills. Doing so also takes away consumer choice. The homeowner, not the government, should always be the one deciding whether to have a gas or electric stove, furnace, water heater, etc.

b. In your opinion, should Congress step in to reinforce fuel neutrality, making sure the choice between gas or electric appliances rests with homeowners and the marketplace, not with bureaucrats pursuing climate agendas?

The law already requires fuel neutrality, but Congress could strengthen these provisions so they cannot be sidestepped as we have seen in the previous administration.

2. You highlighted how multiple rounds of federal efficiency rules have compromised appliance performance, noting for example that modern dishwashers now take "two or more hours to complete a normal cycle, double the time it took before regulations."

a. What does it say about regulatory overreach when Americans must endure appliances that are slower or less effective in the name of efficiency, and how should Congress address rules that reduce people's standard of living?

The appliance standards program now hurts the very consumers it was supposed to be helping. Appliances that don't work as well, are unreliable, and do not last as long as they once did are not what the American people want or need.