

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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February 27, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Subcommittee on Energy
FROM: Committee Majority Staff
RE: Hearing titled “America’s Energy Infrastructure: Authorizing Pipeline Safety”

I. INTRODUCTION

The Subcommittee on Energy will hold a hearing on Wednesday, March 4, 2026, at 10:15 a.m. (ET) in 2123 Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is entitled, “America’s Energy Infrastructure: Authorizing Pipeline Safety.” The hearing will review the following legislation:

- H.R. _____, Pipeline Safety Authorization Act of 2026

II. WITNESSES

- **Paul J. Roberti**, Administrator, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

III. BACKGROUND

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) is a U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) agency that develops and enforces federal safety regulations for the nation’s pipeline infrastructure and the transportation of hazardous materials. PHMSA’s pipeline safety program promotes the safe delivery of over two-thirds of energy products to market. Since 2000, the nation’s energy production has more than doubled and the United States operates one of the most expansive networks of energy pipelines in the world.¹

¹ PIPELINE AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS SAFETY ADMIN. (PHMSA), Budget Estimates Fiscal Year 2026 Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (May 30, 2025), https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2025-05/PHMSA_FY_2026_Budget_Estimates_CJ.pdf.

PHMSA provides oversight of about 3.3 million miles of pipelines and nearly 1 million daily shipments of hazardous materials by land, sea, and air.

PHMSA administers minimum pipeline safety standards for operation, construction, maintenance, and materials; accident and safety reporting procedures; maximum allowable pressure standards; determination of high consequence areas; pipeline integrity management; data monitoring; leak detection; and emergency response plans.

PHMSA's pipeline safety program was authorized through 2023 by the Protecting Our Infrastructure of Pipelines and Enhancing Safety Act of 2020 (PIPES Act).² Although the authorization expired, Congress has continued to appropriate funds for the program's continued operations, most recently in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2026,³ which funded the program through Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 at \$214.8 million. The annual funding is offset by user fees and other fees collected from pipeline owners and operators.

As of February 2025, PHMSA listed over 300 employees in the Office of Pipeline Safety (OPS), including inspectors and accident investigators.⁴ Under its statutory authority, PHMSA may delegate authority to state pipeline safety offices, allowing them to administer safety programs for intrastate pipelines and conduct inspections for interstate pipelines within their state jurisdiction. There were 444 state inspectors in 2024. Because of this important state-federal partnership, PHMSA may reimburse states for up to 80 percent of related expenditures.

The current Administrator of PHMSA, Paul Roberti, was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on September 18, 2025, and sworn in as Administrator on September 25, 2025, by Department of Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy.⁵ Since his appointment, PHMSA has continued progressing through its mandated rulemakings from the PIPES Act of 2020, along with other overdue rulemakings, and posting its progress on PHMSA's website.⁶

Several of PHMSA's regulations are now decades old and may not reflect current technological and safety advancements by the pipeline industry. Reauthorization of PHMSA's pipeline safety program would update Congressional direction and support the agency's work to modernize its safety standards and processes and to clear its queue of mandated rulemakings. As the Committee considers this legislation to reauthorize the pipeline safety program, evaluation of PHMSA's work, priorities, and existing authorities may inform its review.

² Pub. L. No. 116-260 (Div. R, Sec. 101).

³ Pub. L. No. 119-75.

⁴ U.S. DEPT. OF TRANSP., PHMSA, PHMSA Pipeline Safety Program (Feb. 14, 2025), <https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/sites/phmsa.dot.gov/files/2025-03/PHP-Org-Chart-02-14-2025-FINAL.pdf>.

⁵ U.S. DEPT. OF TRANSP., PHMSA, *Administrator* (Sept. 25, 2025), <https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/about-phmsa/leadership/administrator>.

⁶ See *PIPES Act of 2020 Web Chart* (Feb. 19, 2026), <https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/sites/phmsa.dot.gov/files/2026-02/2026%20February%20PIPES%20Act%20Chart.pdf>.

IV. LEGISLATION

A. H.R. ____, Pipeline Safety Authorization Act of 2026

This legislation would reauthorize PHMSA's pipeline safety program for 5 years and update policies and procedures to modernize PHMSA and improve safety standards.

Sec. 1 Short Title. This section provides that the Act may be cited as the "Pipeline Safety Authorization Act of 2026."

Sec. 2 Definitions. This section would modify the definition of "transporting gas" to clarify PHMSA's regulatory authorities with respect to transfer and in-plant piping.

Sec. 3. Minimum Safety Standards. This section would require PHMSA to consider the "safety and economic benefits within the United States" when conducting cost-benefit analysis for proposed regulations.

Sec. 4. Opportunity for Formal Hearing. This section would provide an opportunity for pipeline operators that have been issued a notice of enforcement from PHMSA to have an on-the-record hearing conducted by an administrative law judge. The section would also require the Secretary of Transportation to establish protocols for hearings under this section to ensure orderly process and protection of confidential information.

Sec. 5. Special Permit Program. This section would require that any terms placed on safety waivers (special permits) are specific to the pipeline safety regulation being waived and would establish timelines for consideration of special permit applications. The section would also mandate a report to Congress on the status of safety waivers sought under the special permit program and directs the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to provide a report on PHMSA's implementation of the provision.

Sec. 6. Strengthening Penalties for Pipeline Safety Violations. This section would strengthen penalties for "damaging, destroying, or impairing the operation of" pipeline facilities.

Sec. 7. Authorization Levels. This section would reauthorize PHMSA's pipeline safety programs for five years.

Sec. 8. Pipeline Safety Voluntary Information-Sharing Program. This section would direct PHMSA to establish a voluntary information sharing system to gather, evaluate, and quantify critical pipeline safety data and information to improve safety.

Sec. 9. Excavation Damage Prevention. This section would update PHMSA's assessment criteria for State Damage Prevention Programs and would describe additional

leading practices state one-call programs should consider implementing to prevent excavation damage to pipelines and other underground utilities.

V. STAFF CONTACTS

For any questions regarding this hearing, please contact Mary Martin, Peter Spencer, or Calvin Huggins of the Committee Staff at (202) 225-3641.