

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of**

Subcommittee on Energy Ranking Member Kathy Castor

Hearing on “America’s Energy Infrastructure: Authorizing Pipeline Safety”

March 4, 2026

Pipeline safety should be a bipartisan priority for this Committee. That requires adequate resources and a robust professional workforce. It also requires a regulator willing to do its job – keeping Americans safe.

Congress has proved that we can deliver on that goal. We passed the Pipes Act of 2020 to address methane pollution and improve safety standards for gas gathering lines and other pipeline segments. We followed that in 2021 with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which allocated \$1 billion over five years for grants to help replace leak-prone natural gas pipelines.

Today’s hearing is supposed to be about building on those efforts. Unfortunately, as with so many of the bills my Republican colleagues have decided to bring through this Committee, it’s another empty promise.

My Republican colleagues aren’t serious about safety. They’ve allowed PHMSA’s Office of Pipeline Safety authorization to lapse for over two and a half years.

The Senate Commerce Committee passed a bipartisan PHMSA reauthorization bill. The House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee passed a bipartisan bill. But unfortunately, my Republican colleagues on Energy and Commerce have decided to write a bill without Democratic input, which only reflects the priorities of oil and gas polluters. This is not how we should craft serious, durable policy.

PHMSA needs reform – such as new authorities to regulate emerging technologies, like hydrogen and carbon dioxide pipelines. These are industries that my Republican colleagues have said they support – but this bill is silent. It doesn’t authorize any studies or rulemakings that would help us make these industries safer.

PHMSA needs funding – but this bill authorizes nearly \$200 million per year less than what the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee has passed.

PHMSA needs staff – which is why the House Transportation & Infrastructure bill authorizes an increase in the number of employees with certain subject matter expertise. But this bill does nothing for workforce development.

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It is silent, while under the President Trump, the number of employees at PHMSA has declined 14 percent. Nearly all of PHMSA's senior career staff chose to leave rather than to endorse the Administration's actions.

PHMSA also needs robust Congressional oversight – particularly now. Pipeline safety enforcement was cut in half in 2025. PHMSA should hold dangerous actors accountable by increasing maximum penalties for breaking the law - but this bill does nothing to strengthen enforcement.

Just last week, the President stood before Congress and claimed that he has “rapidly ended” high prices. But that's a lie. Electricity prices are up 13% nationally. The average US household paid \$116 more on their electricity bills in 2025 compared to 2024.

Since Trump took office, utilities have proposed rate hikes of at least \$92 billion. His illegal tariffs cost households \$1200 last year alone. And amid all this pain, the Administration is trying to gut energy assistance and disaster relief programs.

None of this lowers costs. None of this keeps Americans safe.

Once again, President Trump is proving that he has no solutions to the real problems that hardworking families are facing across the country. He's focused more on involving the United States military in other countries and less on the American people struggling to make ends meet.

Our neighbors back home deserve better from their elected leaders.

I urge my Republican colleagues to work with us to develop a real PHMSA reauthorization bill that protects the American people, not just oil and gas special interests. I yield back.