

Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Environment
Markup of H.R. 806, H.R. __, the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act
of 2017, and H.R. __, Brownfields Enhancement Economic
Redevelopment and Reauthorization Act of 2017
June 15, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

Today's markup is another important step in this committee's efforts to modernize our energy infrastructure and update our environmental laws for the 21st century. We've examined each of these issues at great length in previous subcommittee hearings and the bills before us today were informed through much of the feedback we received from our witnesses during that time. I would also note that we fully intend to continue to work on these bills as we move towards a full committee markup.

H.R. 806, reintroduced from last Congress, is enjoying its second run through the committee process—and its importance for reducing the barriers to a more productive American economy remains undiminished. We all support clean air and being good stewards of our environment, but this legislation addresses some necessary issues with respect to the EPA's ozone standards. For its 2008 ozone standards, EPA did not publish implementing regulations until March 2015, which states are now in the process of implementing. Then in October 2015 the EPA issued new, revised ozone standards. This has created a situation where states

currently face the prospect of implementing two different ozone standards simultaneously.

The “Ozone Standards Implementation Act of 2017” ensures appropriate timelines to enable states and local authorities to do this while maintaining continued improvements in the nation’s air quality and without unnecessarily restraining new source permitting and economic development—especially the permitting we need to accelerate our nation’s infrastructure and manufacturing capabilities.

The subcommittee will also consider today the “Brownfields Enhancement Economic Redevelopment and Reauthorization Act of 2017.” Cleaning up contaminated sites through the Brownfields Program can have a tremendous economic impact on a community as well by creating jobs, providing additional funds for redevelopment of the affected area, and increasing property values.

In fact, my home state of Oregon has a very active Brownfields Program and Oregon is on the leading edge of brownfields cleanup. That’s why I am pleased that this bill authorizes the Brownfields Program for the first time since 2006. The bill makes it easier for smaller communities like those in my district to participate in the process of brownfields cleanup and redevelopment— the bill allows states to provide additional grants

of up to \$20,000 to help small, rural, and disadvantaged communities assess and remediate brownfields.

Finally, the subcommittee will also consider the **“Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2017.”** Reliable, affordable, and clean nuclear power is the cornerstone of our electric system. However, challenges associated with managing the byproduct of nuclear generation remain unresolved. It is time that the federal government finally fulfills its requirement to manage spent nuclear fuel.

Breaking this current stalemate is important, not just for our commercial nuclear power industry and ratepayers, but also for the communities throughout the country that currently store this material despite the government’s legal obligation to dispose of it. This includes the Department of Energy’s Hanford site, just a short distance up the Columbia River from my district. Congress has an obligation to honor its commitment to those communities who have contributed to our nation’s security starting with the Manhattan Project, through the Cold War, and still today.

Enactment of the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2017 will advance a solution. The bill provides the tools for DOE and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to complete the pending Yucca Mountain repository license, allows the State of Nevada to

enter into an agreement with the federal government to benefit as the host state, requires DOE to initiate an interim storage program, authorizes DOE to contract with a private entity to temporarily store spent nuclear fuel, reforms the broken structure that funds the program, and strengthens the organization and management of DOE's program.

These bills advance thoughtful solutions that will make a difference for consumers and communities across the country. I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues and hopeful we can get these across the finish line as soon as possible.