

Pallone Opening Remarks at Environment and Climate Change Subcommittee Markup of 15 Bills

Sept. 26, 2019

Today's markup is a significant step forward in this Subcommittee's ongoing efforts to address serious threats to communities nationwide. The 15 bills before us represent the hard work of many of my colleagues, and I am pleased that we have the opportunity to move them forward today.

It's been more than 40 years since the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) first began working to ban asbestos, but today will mark the first vote in the House on legislation that would finally ban asbestos for good. I want to thank Representatives Bonamici and Slotkin for working with me on the Alan Reinstein Ban Asbestos Now Act of 2019. This ban is long overdue, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to work to get it enacted.

We will also consider 13 bills to address PFAS contamination, which is affecting communities all around the nation. These are persistent, toxic chemicals that spread through our water, air and soil. These bills are an opportunity for us to take bold action to address this serious environmental problem. Given what we already know about these forever chemicals, we must act now to stop the flow of these chemicals into our environment and our bodies.

I want to thank Representatives Dingell, Soto, Kuster and Upton on our Committee, and Representatives Dean, Delgado, Stevens, Khanna, Fletcher, Rouda and Maloney for their leadership on these bills.

These bills will stem the flow of new PFAS into commerce, contain contaminated sites, empower consumers, protect drinking water and protect air quality. Individually, they are important. Together, they offer our communities the tools they need to combat this growing environmental problem.

I had hoped that, at this point, members of the Committee on both sides of the aisle would have come together to hammer out any needed changes to the PFAS and asbestos bills. Unfortunately, we aren't there yet, but I am committed to continuing to work with my colleagues to find consensus as these bills move forward. I urge all of my colleagues to join me in forwarding these critical public health protections to the full Committee to demonstrate we are taking real strides to protect the health and safety of our communities.

Lastly, we will consider legislation to address our nation's nuclear waste problem, H.R. 2699, introduced by Rep. McNerney and Ranking Member Shimkus. This bill is similar to H.R. 3053 from the 115th Congress, which this Committee reported out by a vote of 49 to 4 and then passed the House with broad bipartisan support.

I would like to thank Rep. McNerney for his leadership on this issue. I also appreciate that Ranking Member Shimkus – when he Chaired this Subcommittee in the prior Congress – worked with us in good faith to address our concerns and incorporate interim storage language authored by Rep. Matsui.

Communities across the country are expressing frustration as more and more nuclear plants close, but there is no real national solution to moving the spent fuel to a centralized interim storage facility or

permanent repository. Whether it is a general safety concern, or the desire of the community to redevelop the land currently housing the spent fuel, it is critical that we find a path forward to begin the process of moving nuclear waste out of these communities.

Again, I thank all of the members for their work on the 15 bills before us today, and I look forward to moving them to full Committee soon.