

Chair Bill Johnson
Environment, Manufacturing, and Critical Materials Subcommittee
Hearing: Exposing the Environmental, Human Rights and National
Security Risks of the Biden Administration's Rush to Green Policies

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As prepared for delivery

Good morning and welcome to today's hearing entitled "Exposing the Environmental, Human Rights, and National Security Risks of the Biden Administration's Rush to Green Policies."

Since day one, President Biden has put Americans at risk by pushing a "whole-of-government" climate agenda that increases energy costs, undermines consumer choice, and strengthens America's adversaries, especially China and Russia.

This drastic and burdensome policy agenda also appears disconnected from his stated climate goals, in that many of the so-called "green" energy technologies have significant environmental impacts.

Even worse...the rush to green agenda is far from over.

For instance, I am deeply concerned with the EPA's recent announcement on proposed standards for light-and medium-duty vehicles that would force the electrification of two-thirds of our domestic car market.

Now, I have nothing against electric vehicles, but Americans deserve the right and the ability to choose an affordable car that meets their needs, rather than being forced to pay more because of a government mandate.

Democrats and the Biden Administration don't want to examine the true costs of these policy choices to the environment, human rights, and national security in the United States and around the world.

In any other line of work, the failure to discuss risks honestly and transparently would be malpractice!

We should not be reckless with America's energy future, and today's hearing presents an opportunity to take a more holistic, transparent approach.

So, if we want to look at risks to the environment, we need to look at the deployment of renewable energy technologies that require clearing a significant amount of land.

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory estimates that solar panels need 5 acres of land to generate one megawatt of electricity, and wind turbines need 35 acres!

To put that in context, you need thirty times the amount of land covered in solar panels to equal the capacity of one natural gas fired power plant.

Rural communities across the country are voicing concerns with solar and wind operations popping up near their neighborhoods.

In Ohio alone, more than 10 counties banned utility-scale solar and wind energy facilities last year.

Achieving President Biden's renewable energy goals would ignore the concerns posed by many of my constituents and others across the country.

But, that's not all...
these same renewable energy technologies pose risks to Americans at the end-of-life stage.

The International Renewable Energy Agency projects that global solar panel waste could reach 78 million tons by 2050, with anywhere from 7.5 million and 10 million tons of waste in need of disposal in the United States.

The sheer amount of waste, some of which the EPA considers to be hazardous, is deeply troubling and begs the question of whether existing landfill capacity will be overwhelmed.

And let's consider human rights! The supply chain of critical materials essential for solar, wind, and EV batteries is tainted with forced labor, slavery, and child labor abuses.

Take a look at this photo...

Both the State Department and the Department of Labor have acknowledged violations with more than 40,000 children engaging in "artisanal and small-scale mining," digging for cobalt with their bare hands in the Congo, as well as thousands of members of the Uyghur Muslim community forced into labor in China.

We cannot be morally selective. It is our duty to ensure that American energy supply chains do not rely on slavery or child labor.

We should also prioritize American national security rather than handing federal subsidies and American taxpayer dollars to Chinese companies.

China controls 50-70% of lithium and cobalt refining, key inputs for EV batteries, as well as 90% of global refining capacity for rare earth elements.

Until we increase U.S. capacity for critical mineral extraction and refining, increasing our reliance on renewable energy and EVs will only benefit China, a country openly seeking our destabilization.

So let me be clear: our goal today is to better understand the serious challenges presented by various energy technologies and their real-life impacts on American consumers.

This conversation is especially needed given the speed with which this administration is insisting, with calls for 100% EVs, and 100% wind and solar.

Solar and wind energy, and other renewable sources can and should be a part of our energy mix – but not the only part. Energy security and reliability derive from a diverse energy mix.

We should not force a rapid transition to entirely intermittent, non-dispatchable, unreliable sources of energy.

So, I urge proponents of this agenda to ask themselves, why are we doing this?

Will the American people, suffering under inflation, pay less or more for necessities and transportation? Will their standard of living improve or decline?

What will their lives look like when this so-called “transition” is complete?

It is time that we prioritize them...when we measure success with America’s energy and environmental policy.

With that, I recognize the ranking member for his five minutes.