

Chairman Brett Guthrie
Opening Statement—Subcommittee on Environment:
“Maximizing Opportunities for Redeveloping Brownfields Sites:
Assessing the Potential for New American Innovation”
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As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Chairman Griffith and Ranking Member Pallone, Ranking Member Tonko, my colleagues, and thank you to our witnesses for being here. Today, we will be examining implementation of the EPA’s Brownfields Program and opportunities to carry on the bipartisan tradition of reauthorizing the program.

As you all know, Brownfields are contaminated sites, or areas that are suspected of being contaminated. The negative impact of a Brownfields site does not end within the geographic boundary of the site itself. They can also pose environmental hazards beyond their borders and lead to broader economic downturns in their communities, and unfortunately, brownfields are found nationwide.

Legal liability for existing contamination often discourages buyers from purchasing properties for redevelopment out of fear of litigation. Properties then sit vacant as communities lose the opportunity to improve their local economy.

We have a mandate to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, and part of why we are here today is to look at how we can improve upon this program moving forward and redevelop brownfields sites to support new and emerging industries, potentially even including opportunities to build state-of-the-art AI data centers.

The Brownfields Program has been successful in aiding economic development while prioritizing environmental contamination.

Just look at my home state of Kentucky. The historic Fayette County Courthouse in Lexington was used for over a hundred years before the courts transitioned to a bigger facility. Shortly after becoming vacant, workers discovered structural defects, water damage, high levels of lead paint, asbestos, and other hazardous materials.

The public-private partnership between the developer and the EPA through the Brownfields Program made its revitalization possible. This building now houses a restaurant, visitors center, event space, and is a focal point of the community while maintaining its historic integrity.

You have major sites like Hudson Yards in New York City, which was built on a Long Island Railroad yard. When completed, Hudson Yards is expected to contribute 19 billion dollars per year to the local economy.

Other Brownfields sites across the country have been repurposed to help our most vulnerable populations. In Indianapolis, a vacant 19th century iron foundry was given a second chance through this program and now provides affordable housing for homeless veterans.

This program also helps us on our mission to expand nuclear power and restore American energy dominance. In the 118th Congress, I was proud to see my bill, the Nuclear for Brownfields Site Preparation Act, signed into the law as part of the ADVANCE Act. My bill utilizes existing infrastructure to lower project costs and furthers our investment in nuclear power by allowing nuclear facilities at brownfield sites.

The Brownfields Program has been a bipartisan tradition here at the Energy and Commerce Committee, and this hearing today upholds that legacy.

I look forward to our discussion this morning. Thank you and I yield back.