

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Environment
Hearing on “From Gridlock to Growth: Permitting Reform
Under the Clean Air Act”**

September 16, 2025

Today, we are examining five Republican bills that once again put corporate polluters over people and will make the American people sicker. With these proposals, Republicans are eroding the fundamental purpose of the Clean Air Act and threatening our ability to ensure Americans have clean and healthy air to breathe.

We know air pollution poses serious and significant health risks to communities every day. It is linked to cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and over 100,000 premature deaths annually. Unfortunately, we are not considering any practical,

bipartisan solutions to address the serious threat of air pollution. Instead the Republican majority has offered up a slate of failed ideas, repackaged as so called “permitting reform.”

Under the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) uses the best available science to set health-based standards called the National Ambient Air Quality Standards or NAAQS (*knacks*). These standards are a critical guidepost that let us know what level of pollution is safe to breathe. Using these standards, the New Source Review program, which is administered by the states, ensures that new and modified major sources of air pollution use the appropriate pollution controls to limit emissions. That way, facilities can be good neighbors and stewards of the environment while contributing to the local and national economy.

For decades, this has been the story of the Clean Air Act. It has a long history of working to drive both economic development and good public health for American communities. Any potential changes to the law should continue to have those goals in mind. Unfortunately, the legislation before us today falls woefully short.

One bill – H.R. 161 – would give Clean Air Act exemptions to favored industries, remove any incentive to cut pollution, and allow polluters to cook the books on how they measure facility emissions.

One discussion draft – the RED Tape Act – removes the need to review the air quality impacts of major projects. And the so-called Air Permitting Improvements to Protect National Security Act gives the President the ability to waive Clean Air

Act permit requirements, while simultaneously creating a pay-to-pollute scheme that lets large industrial sources off the hook for the harm they cause.

What's more, the FIRE Act and FENCES Act are repackaged provisions from the Republicans' old Smoggy Skies legislation. The Subcommittee just had a hearing on these policies in June, and now my colleagues have carved out the problematic exemptional events and sanctions provisions into two new drafts for consideration at today's hearing.

Instead of reiterating my objections to these bills, I will say this: considering these policies for a second time this year is a giant waste of time. Especially since the Republican majority fails to address our serious concerns. There is much this Subcommittee could discuss that would protect public health

while supporting innovation. But so long as Republicans continue to repackage these tired ideas with no improvements, we will continue to oppose them.

Republicans' priorities could not be clearer. The Republican agenda is designed to serve their corporate special interest friends – not hardworking Americans. Instead of addressing deadly air pollution or improving permitting processes, they are pushing policies to further enrich their billionaire polluter friends by stealing Inflation Reduction Act investments in clean energy from their own communities. This only serves to keep energy prices high for American families and make our air dirtier. The legislation being considered today is more of the same.

And with that, I yield back the balance of my time.