

Chairman Gary Palmer

Opening Statement—Subcommittee on Environment

Subcommittee Markup of Seven (7) Bills

December 10, 2025

As prepared for delivery

Welcome to today's Environment subcommittee markup of seven (7) bills to improve the process for establishing and implementing the National Ambient Air Quality Standards and to streamline environmental reviews and the New Source Review pre-construction permitting program under the Clean Air Act.

No one questions that the Clean Air Act has been important in helping to improve air quality since the law was first enacted more than half a century ago. However, the law has not been significantly amended since 1990 and has not kept pace to meet the economic and security risks facing this country.

The commonsense permitting reforms contained in these seven bills are needed to improve the Clean Air Act so the United States can continue to be the world leader in economic prosperity, technological innovation, and environmental quality.

At subcommittee hearings in June and September, we heard testimony from several witnesses that the air quality standards for fine particulate matter and ozone that were issued by the Biden-Harris administration will stifle economic growth and be nearly impossible for states and regulated industries to meet because they are so close to background levels and that decisions on whether a state is meeting the standards should not be impacted by pollution caused by wildfires and from international sources outside of the state's control.

We also heard testimony from top state environmental regulators that several of the deadlines in the Clean Air Act are impossible for EPA and states to implement. For example, several witnesses said it would make sense to extend the timeframe for reviewing air quality standards from every five years, as it is in current law, to every 10 years.

We also heard testimony from multiple witnesses that the current pre-construction permitting and environmental review provisions of the Clean Air Act can slow down or even block construction of high-tech manufacturing and energy projects that we need more of in this country to win the race for critical minerals and advanced semiconductors against China.

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The seven bills that we will be marking up are:

- H.R. 6409, Foreign Emissions and Nonattainment Clarification for Economic Stability (FENCES) (Rep. Pfluger).

This bill would clarify that foreign air pollution is not to be considered when deciding if a State or air district is meeting an air standard.

- H.R. 4218, Clean Air and Economic Advancement Reform (CLEAR) Act (Rep. Carter)

This bill makes several improvements to the process for establishing and implementing the air quality standards program under the Clean Air Act.

- H.R. 6387, Fire Improvement and Reforming Exceptional Events (FIRE) Act (Rep. Evans)

This bill clarifies that emissions from forest fires and other events are not factored into whether a State or air district is meeting an air standard.

- H.R. 4214, Clean Air and Building Infrastructure Improvement Act (Rep. Allen)

This bill clarifies when a new air standard has to be factored into preconstruction permits under the Clean Air Act.

- H.R. 161, New Source Review Permitting Improvement Act (Rep. Griffith)

This bill clarifies what kind of construction or modifications of existing facilities would trigger permitting under the Clean Air Act.

- H.R. 6373, Air Permitting Improvements to Protect National Security Act (Rep. Palmer)

This bill would allow the President to waive the requirement that facilities that are critical to our national security – including critical mineral processing facilities -- offset emissions as part of the permitting process.

- H.R. 6398, Reducing and Eliminating Duplicative Environmental Regulations (RED Tape) Act (Rep. Joyce)

This bill would streamline the environmental review and permitting process.

The passage of these bills will go a long way toward improving our infrastructure and making permitting more predictable and cost-effective. Some of these bills include ideas that we have considered in previous years, but some of them offer creative solutions based on feedback we have received.

I urge all of my colleagues to support these pieces of legislation, and I yield back.