

Ranking Member Paul Gosar
Opening Statement
Full Committee Hearing – October 1, 2020

Thank you, Chairman Grijalva, and thank you to the witnesses for taking the time to join us today to discuss how to best serve environmental justice communities.

HR 5986, the Environmental Justice for All Act, sponsored by Chairman Grijalva, seeks to achieve the laudable and bipartisan goal of lifting up and revitalizing low-income and minority communities. However, predictably, my colleague seeks to somehow accomplish this by imposing a slew of new environmental mandates rather than incentivizing investment and free market growth where it is sorely needed.

Firstly, this legislation expands the already onerous regulatory approval process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), ensuring further delays in new infrastructure and energy development. This bill goes a step further and requires Federal agencies to develop a so-called “community impact report” assessing potential environmental hazards for *any* Federal action, even though these concerns are already addressed under NEPA, the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. While well-intentioned, I think common sense tells us that every project that might make a meaningful difference in improving a vulnerable community will be derailed by endless litigation if this bill passes. Renewable energy, broadband, affordable housing and almost any new infrastructure will have to clear the impossible hurdles created by this language. Unfortunately, implementing this legislation will cause these communities to miss out on important opportunities to improve their communities, create jobs and attract investment.

Further, this bill imposes new fees on the oil, gas, and coal industries and transfers the revenues to communities and workers that have lost conventional energy jobs. These new fees will cause unnecessary job losses in the energy sector and ensure that this new revenue stream for economic development assistance is ultimately eliminated by destroying the energy industry. And we all know that these fees will be a drop in the bucket compared to the economic hardships experienced in communities where entire industries have been dismantled. Just ask the hard-working people in Appalachia about the struggle to overcome tens of thousands of jobs lost in the coal industry in just a few years’ time. This bill will do the very same thing to energy producing States out West, leaving them with staggering job losses and insufficient revenue to generate new economic development.

Overly ambitious environmental restrictions, like those included in the bill before us today, have already caused significant harm to American households where they have been deployed. Unfortunately, in States like California, rolling blackouts are becoming commonplace as wildfires rage due, in part, to negligent forest management. Can we really afford to take California’s policies nationwide? Can the most disadvantaged communities afford all of this red tape as they wait on affordable housing, reliable energy, and state of the art broadband and infrastructure to come to their neighborhood? Most importantly, can we afford to ask our most vulnerable communities to take on yet another risk of an entirely new regulatory regime as we work to recover from a global pandemic?

I was pleased to sign on to a bill introduced by my colleague, Representative Hern, just this morning to study and address energy poverty in low-income, minority, rural and senior populations across the country. This bill, the Energy Poverty Prevention and Accountability Act, draws on many of the recommendations that our Republican witness, Mr. Hollie, made before this Committee when he testified last year. As my colleagues on the other side continue to introduce bill after bill aimed at destroyed our energy economy and tying up every Federal action aimed at modernizing our infrastructure in litigation, we must ensure that we have mechanisms in place to analyze the impact of these regulations on at-risk communities. If we are able to understand the true impact of these Washington mandates before they are

implemented, perhaps we can avoid causing further harm to American households in pursuit of our colleagues lofty Green New Deal fantasies.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today. Thank you, and I yield back.