

Chair: [GAVEL] The Full Committee on Natural Resources will come to order.

Chair: *[OPENING STATEMENT]*

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Thank you, Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses for taking the time to join us today.

H.R. 2021, titled the Environment Justice for All Act and sponsored by Chairman Grijalva, truthfully is a legislative vehicle for more of the same from this Majority.

When Americans want to get back to work, it creates more red tape.

When Americans are getting gouged at the pump, it doubles down on their pain by increasing the cost of production.

And when it claims to speak to so-called environmental justice, it plainly misses the mark.

For starters, it creates more opportunities for radical special interest groups to do what they

do best: file lawsuits and get their lawyers paid while keeping workers on the benches.

Specifically, the bill requires Federal agencies to develop more reports, more studies, and more comment periods, as if the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, and every other possible Act created does not already exist.

Renewable energy, broadband, affordable housing, and almost any new infrastructure will have to clear new studies that will be made into 90 day studies, which inevitably will turn into 6-month studies, because every environmental group in DC is licking its chops at more statutes to tie up in Court, billing by the hour.

Meanwhile, the at-risk communities we seek to help are missing out on important opportunities

to modernize their infrastructure, create jobs, and attract investment.

The bill also creates new fees on oil, gas, and coal industries, and creates another government payout scheme.

When levying these new fees, it will lead to job loss and eliminate production on federal lands. And therefore, even the bill's new revenue scheme will dry up, once again leaving communities reliant on affordable energy and high-wage jobs high and dry once again.

And when we lose those jobs, we lose revenue to schools, and funding for law enforcement, and other essential services, while driving up the cost of gas.

According to Triple A, right now the average price of gas for an Arizonan is \$3.66 a gallon, hovering above the national average. Instead of

addressing this problem, the Majority is proposing to push this cost up more.

Meanwhile, looking abroad, we have Russia empowered by President Biden's Nord Stream 2 gift, knocking on Ukraine's door.

Mr. Chair, energy security is national security. Proposals like this make us less secure and hand another tool to Russia, who is leveraging their corner of the oil and gas market to push its goals.

The Majority has also failed to invite witnesses from the federal agencies that would implement this bill, so we will not receive the administration's input on this legislation or their analysis on whether the provisions in this bill can be effectively carried out.

My guess is these agencies lack the personnel and capacity, but I suppose we will leave that up to the imagination.

Last Congress, the Majority held a hearing on a previous version of this bill and Republicans invited Derrick Hollie, the President of Reaching America, to testify.

Mr. Hollie keenly noted that energy poverty is a huge issue for minority communities across the country and he urged our Committee to focus on increasing access to affordable energy by making Federal energy projects easier to build, not more difficult.

Since that hearing in 2020 and Democrats chose to ignore his voice, energy prices are through the roof, saddling American families with new questions around the dinner table about how they will afford every day life.

One of the witnesses we will hear from today is from the North Slope of Alaska, where President Biden continued his campaign against American energy and recently announced plans to revert management of the NPR-A to the Obama administration's 2013 Integrated Activity Plan.

Even with the stated goal of increasing consultation, the Biden Administration once again ignored minority voices in opposition, and especially the North Slope Iñupiat (IN-EW-PEE-IT), running counter to his very own Executive Order 13175.

So then I ask, which communities qualify for consultation under 13175? Because it certainly is not Mr. Hollie, or the Iñupiat (IN-EW-PEE-IT).

Oil and gas production on the North Slope is critical to these communities. One project in

particular, the Willow project within NPR-A, would provide thousands of jobs and crucial funding to address the needs of North Slope communities.

Taxes levied on oil and gas development have enabled North Slope communities to invest in public infrastructure, utilities, education, law enforcement, fire fighters, emergency response and other services. The Trump administration understood this and worked hand in hand with these communities on the 2020 IAP.

If the Majority were serious about environmental justice, today's hearing would be about permitting reform and reliable, affordable, energy.

But instead, it's about the same topic the Majority has focused on in every hearing: more lawsuits, more red tape, and more inflation.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.