

Ranking Member Westerman

Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources Hearing

Opening Statement – April 19, 2021

Thank you for yielding Mr. Chairman, and I thank all of the witnesses for making the time to be here today. Today we will discuss H.R. 1689, the Offshore Wind for Territories Act, H.R. 2635, the Restoring Offshore Wind Opportunities Act, and H.R. 998, the Offshore Wind Jobs and Opportunity Act. I appreciate that the Chairman has called another hearing in this Subcommittee on a bipartisan topic, this time on offshore wind. I support an all-of-the-above energy strategy and that includes offshore wind development. The bills we have before us today certainly present some exciting opportunities, but I also have concerns with some of these bills as drafted and I hope we can work in a bipartisan fashion on further improvements.

The Offshore Wind for the Territories Act, sponsored by Rep. Gonzalez-Colon, would apply the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act to U.S. territories, authorizing wind lease sales for the first time. This legislation would also establish a revenue sharing mechanism and generate funds for coral reef conservation. Currently, the territories are largely dependent on imported fuels like diesel. This

bill would allow territories to diversify their energy supply and provide our military installations with increased energy security. I support this bill and I appreciate the Majority bringing it forward for consideration today.

The Restoring Offshore Wind Opportunities Act, sponsored by Rep. Tonko, would exempt wind energy from the energy leasing moratorium in the mid-Atlantic planning area near North Carolina. While I'm pleased that my colleagues want to allow exploration and leasing for wind energy in this area, we shouldn't be unilaterally placing entire planning areas off limits for energy development of any kind. These areas should be open for exploration and seismic testing for multiple energy sectors, and each potential lease sale should be evaluated by the agencies. Rather than picking winners and losers, we should be able to work together to find a way forward that allows consideration of each project under the law.

Finally, the Offshore Wind Jobs and Opportunities Act, sponsored by Rep. Keating, would authorize \$25 million per year for 5 years for job training grants, administered by the Department of the Interior, for the offshore wind workforce. While I support workforce development for our energy sector, I have several concerns with this legislation as currently drafted. First, I agree that growing our domestic workforce is a top priority, especially as we recover from the COVID-19

crisis – but we must also do our due diligence on new spending authorizations and strive to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. There is no offset identified in this bill and there is no matching requirement to ensure that these dollars are leveraged by the communities that benefit from the program.

Additionally, labor unions and institutions of higher education are the only two entities that can receive grants under the bill, with colleges and universities partnered with labor unions given priority for funds. Job training programs that utilize federal dollars should avoid picking favorites, and should instead focus on training the best workforce possible and minimizing unnecessary federal mandates.

I'd like to add that if this Committee is serious about growing wind energy development on the OCS, we must consider meaningful reform under the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Duplicative, costly regulations drive operators away from federal lands and waters and prevent them from maximizing their investments in the wind energy workforce. Lessons learned by the offshore oil and gas industry can be directly applied to this new energy source on the OCS – rather than drawing lines between hydrocarbon and renewable energy sources, we should be integrating our experiences in the energy sector on the OCS to strengthen this emerging industry.

Thank you and I yield back.