COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
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Statement of Environment Subcommittee Chairman David Schweikert (R-Ariz.)
Hearing on Science of Capture and Storage: Understanding EPA's Carbon Rules

Chairman Schweikert: I want to thank the witnesses for being here today. Your expertise is invaluable in helping this committee understand the practical and sometimes negative and damaging effects of EPA rulemaking. We are here to learn the facts about carbon capture and storage. And more specifically, we are here to see whether those facts support what EPA has proposed.

When I look at the EPA's new source performance standardsproposal, I'm reminded of the Air Force's plans to develop a nuclear powered plane. That's right—a nuclear powered plane! They called it Project Pluto or "The Flying Crowbar."

Americans knew the power of atomic weaponry and military tools. The components had been tested. We had jet planes and nuclear reactors.

But something happened in moving from a dream to reality. The reality was that nuclear power worked, but only under specific controlled conditions, and in limited applications. And with a lot of supervision, testing and well trained staff.

Of course in hind sight, we understand that "Project Pluto's" nuclear powered aircraft would have been a disaster—and we luckily avoided that. We never built a fleet of "Flying Crowbars." In this way, Carbon Capture Storage is similar. It might work under specific conditions, but not everywhere. And we have no reason to believe it will work at the scale EPA is expecting us to believe.

This Administration has made no secret that it is an enemy to affordable fossil fuels, including coal. From what I have witnessed it appears the Administration would rather see carbon capture and storage fail altogether

It was candidate Obama who famously said that if you want to build a coal plant you can – it's just that it will bankrupt you. With this rule it looks like the President is keeping that old campaign promise—to bankrupt coal. But at least they are being upfront about CCS for coal power. What's more troubling is what's hinted at but left unsaid. I want to know what this rule will really do, not just today but five, ten, twenty years down the road.

While the Administration likes to tout the economic benefits the natural gas revolution is bringing us, they are simultaneously attacking this affordable and renewable energy source. Likewise, this rule is at odds with the Administration's claimed goal: addressing global CO2 concentrations. The EPA's rule on carbon capture and storage would actually halt CCS research and development.

These rules are simply a thinly veiled attempt to prevent new coal power and eventually take down natural gas.

Does the EPA think Americans cannot see past their empty rhetoric? There are towns and communities all across this nation that want this administration to uphold their all of the above energy strategy.

But even if environmental extremists could prevent American's from enjoying reliable and affordable fossil fuels, developing countries have no intention of giving up fossil fuels. So an EPA rule that derails carbon capture and storage development will be disastrous.

Here's the bottom line: The Administration's rhetoric is disingenuous at best.

America is long overdue for a frank conversation about the future of our domestic energy solutions. No more hiding-the-ball. Let's take a step back from the end-of-the-world-scenarios—on both sides. Gather the facts. And have an honest discussion about the consequences of our policy choices. EPA's new source performance standards rule requires something that doesn't exist yet—full-scale power with at least 40% carbon capture and storage.

The Agency largely justifies the proposal on an assumption that captured CO2 will be used in enhanced oil recovery (EOR) operations.

The EPA has touted that the sale of CO2 would help offset the incredible costs of the capture side of CCS systems. But EPA's new source performance standards for power plants require full scale power with at least forty perfect carbon capture systems. In addition, the standards add new requirements to enhanced oil recovery options that effectively remove it as a compliance option.

These Oil Recovery operators can't comply, leaving power plants with no option but geologic sequestration. But permanent geologic sequestration has serious, unresolved scientific, legal, and regulatory problems.

This rule twists the clear language of the Clean Air Act and allows the EPA to require energy producers to use unproven technology. It sets up obstacles to compliance that undercut the very technology it claims to promote. This isn't about climate change. It's about expanding Federal power and it sets a dangerous precedent.

Let's have a discussion that plays this rule out to its logical conclusion. Then we can consider if that's a place we want to go as a nation.

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