

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Whitfield**  
**Subcommittee on Energy and Power**  
**Hearing on “Oversight of Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of**  
**2011 and Related Issues”**  
**July 14, 2015**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

Pipeline safety oversight is an important and ongoing priority with this subcommittee. This morning we will conduct our first oversight hearing on the Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of 2011 and its implementation by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). I welcome the interim Executive Director of PHMSA as well as a second panel that includes representatives of the oil and natural gas industry, local government and other perspectives.

It has been more than three years since the Pipeline Safety Act was enacted, and PHMSA’s implementation has not been satisfactory. Many of the mandates – at least 17 out of 42 included in the Pipeline Safety Act, have not been completed, including several described as key mandates with potentially large impacts on pipeline operations nationwide.

The potential consequences of these delays are serious. In May, a significant oil spill occurred in Santa Barbara, California, and just days ago the same company reported another incident in Illinois. We have written letters both to PHMSA and this company seeking more information.

It cannot be said for certain that full implementation of the Pipeline Safety Act would have made a difference in Santa Barbara or any other individual oil spill or natural gas pipeline explosion. Nonetheless, we owe it to the American people to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure the safety of the nation’s pipelines. The Pipeline Safety Act includes a number of such steps that have yet to be put into action.

The increase in domestic oil and gas production is clearly good news, but it does present significant infrastructure challenges. Whether it is oil, refined products, or natural gas, there is inherent risk in moving high volumes of product through aging and sometimes inadequate infrastructure. Part of the answer lies in constructing new pipelines and replacing old ones, but perhaps even more important is applying new technology to ensure the safety of the existing system.

Many experts believe that pipelines are the safest means of transporting natural gas and liquid hydrocarbons, but the Santa Barbara spill and other recent incidents underscore the fact that there is considerable room for improvement. It is important to understand why the timely implementation of the Pipeline Safety Act has proven so difficult and how PHMSA can expedite matters. And as we begin to look ahead to reauthorization of this statute, I am also interested in learning about PHMSA’s priorities and if additional legislative steps should be taken.

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