

Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Environment
Hearing on “Big Relief For Small Business: Legislation Reducing
Regulatory Burdens On Small Manufacturers And Other Job
Creators”
September 13, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

I come from a district back in Oregon comprised of many rural communities where small businesses are most often the core of local economies and the primary job creator. That is just one reason why federal regulators need to be especially careful when imposing costs on the small businesses, not to mention the consumers, least able to absorb them.

I believe that EPA has on occasion failed to consider the interests of the “little guy” when regulating sectors dominated by small manufacturers and other small businesses resulting in policies that do more economic harm than environmental good, and place undue burden on consumers. Today, we will consider four bills that make commonsense adjustments to preserve small businesses and jobs while still protecting the environment.

We will address the impact of regulations and policies aimed at brick makers, coal refuse-to-energy plants, the amateur racing industry, and, particularly important to many in rural Oregon, wood stoves.

In many parts of Oregon, we’re surrounded by forests and wood stoves are the most economical way to heat a home or a ranch shop. But Oregonians in these areas know all too well how expensive burdensome regulations can be. Areas like Lakeview and Klamath Falls have found themselves facing no good option between risking air quality restrictions that make could prohibit economic growth, or forcing residents to purchase expensive new wood stoves that meet new regulations. These communities ended up spending \$1.5 million to help consumers afford new stoves.

All this, while our federal forests continue to burn catastrophically every summer because of a lack of proper management, pumping unregulated particulate matter, aerosols, and carbon into the air. In short, right now most of my communities are

suffocating from the smoke of wildfires. More than 500,000 acres have burned. It's hard for our citizens to understand how the failure of the federal government to better manage forest lands to reduce the pollution from fires is balanced against the punitive and costly regulation of another federal agency when they're trying to scrape by and heat their homes.

Some may argue that Congress has no role modifying EPA rules, and that we should simply wait it out while legal challenges work their way through the courts or EPA completes its reconsideration process of these policies. With respect to the issues and legislation being addressed today, I disagree. After all, it was Congress that delegated to EPA its authority under the Clean Air Act, and Congress has the right and the duty to step in when we see this authority being misused in ways that threaten small businesses and jobs. Furthermore, time is short and there is no guarantee that either the courts or the agency will act soon enough to prevent plant closures and pink slips.

The direct and indirect jobs in these sectors are well worth preserving, and that can be done with minimal and targeted changes to existing EPA provisions.

We may hear claims today that these bills represent a dangerous rollback of environmental and public health protections, but we need to maintain a sense of perspective. For one thing, none of the four sectors at issue are particularly significant sources of emissions. For example, coal refuse-to-energy plants represent about one half of one percent of the nation's coal-fired capacity, and vehicles modified to be used exclusively for competition are an even smaller fraction of the 250 million vehicles owned by Americans. Additionally, many of these businesses face other measures that restrict emissions. The brick industry has already reduced emissions by nearly 95 percent according to a study by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Perhaps most importantly, none of the bills we will discuss repeals any regulation - they simply make minimal adjustments in order to reduce the risk of plant shutdowns and layoffs.

I conclude by noting that EPA recently updated its air quality trends to include the 2016 data, and the news is very good. Air pollution continues to decline, and that includes nearly all the emissions at issue today. The data shows that there is no environmental justification for inflicting economic harm on small businesses and the communities where they are located, and thus there is every reason to pass these bills to ensure that any such harm is avoided.