

Chairman Alan S. Lowenthal
Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee Legislative Hearing:
Building a 21st Century American Offshore Wind Workforce
June 11, 2019

The Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources will come to order.

The Subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on the job creation opportunities in the offshore wind industry and H.R. 3068, the Offshore Wind Jobs and Opportunity Act.

Under Committee Rule 4(f), any oral opening statements are limited to the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member or their designees.

I ask unanimous consent that all other Members' opening statements be made part of the hearing record if they are submitted to the Subcommittee Clerk by 5:00 pm today. *[pause]* Hearing no objection, so ordered.

I also ask unanimous consent for Representatives Van Drew, Tonko, and Keating to sit on the dais and participate in this morning's hearing. *[pause]* Hearing no objection, so ordered.

As I stated at our previous hearing on renewable energy, our nation's public lands and waters contain some of the sunniest, windiest, and most geologically active places in the country, if not the world. They are often ideal locations for solar, wind, and geothermal energy development.

While last month's hearing focused on renewable energy development on public lands, today's hearing will look at offshore wind, an enormous source of clean, renewable energy that is largely untapped in this country.

There is no doubt that a transition away from fossil fuels to zero-emission energy sources is essential if we are to leave a recognizable world for our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren, and beyond.

With strategic and thoughtful planning, that transition can be an opportunity for us to build sustainable economies for the clean-energy future and ensure that people most impacted by this transition have new opportunities that allow them to support their families.

Offshore wind in federal waters will play a critical role in this mission, and we must pursue it as aggressively as possible, while of course making sure that we take into account the needs of other ocean stakeholders, including fishermen and our military.

While the United States still lags behind most of Europe when it comes to offshore wind, we are well positioned for long-term success. In fact, according to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, the offshore wind energy potential of the United States is nearly double the nation's current electricity use.

Think about that, even when taking into account technology limitations, environmental considerations, and areas that are off limits because of other ocean activities, offshore wind in this country has the potential to produce two times the amount of electricity that we are currently using today.

This is astounding. We cannot afford to let this resource go under-developed.

Offshore wind is good for our planet, good for our economy, and good for our national security.

But as we all know, we need a highly skilled and fully trained workforce to make this energy transition a reality.

As I stated at the very first hearing of the year on this subcommittee, we need to support American communities and workers with the same effort and urgency that we need to confront climate change. The Offshore Wind Jobs and Opportunity Act before us today helps meet that goal, which is why I was proud to introduce the bill alongside several of my colleagues.

States, unions, institutes of higher education, and industry are already taking action to identify workforce training needs and develop offshore wind supply chains, but the federal government must be doing more to help them in this effort.

This bill creates a new federal grant program to make sure that we have trained workers for the thousands of new jobs in manufacturing, logistics, engineering, construction, and long-term operations and maintenance jobs that are required to support offshore wind projects.

The bill prioritizes grants to community colleges, organizations that service minority populations and veterans, and those helping workers from other industries transition to jobs in offshore wind.

Whether East Coast, West Coast or Gulf Coast, blue-collar or white-collar, a prosperous offshore wind industry can benefit American workers and businesses of all types. There have been a number of other renewable energy job training programs set up in the past ten years, but so far offshore wind has been left behind. If we want to secure global leadership, the federal government must be a stronger partner in developing this critical workforce.

Thank you to all the witnesses for appearing before us today, I very much look forward to your testimony.

I now recognize Ranking Member Gosar for his opening statement.