

Chairman Alan S. Lowenthal
Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee Oversight Hearing:
“Trump Administration Broken Promises on Renewable Energy”
September 22, 2020

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

The Subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on the Trump Administration’s record of broken promises on renewable energy.

Under Committee Rule 4(f), any oral opening statements at hearings 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. Without objection, the Chair may also declare a recess subject to the call of the Chair. *[pause]* Hearing no objection, so ordered.

As described in the notice, statements, documents, or motions must be submitted to the electronic repository at HNRCdocs@mail.house.gov.

Additionally, please note that, as with in-person meetings, Members are responsible for their own microphones. As with our in-person meetings, Members can be muted by staff only to avoid inadvertent background noise.

Finally, Members or witnesses experiencing technical problems should inform committee staff immediately.

When President Trump took office, nobody believed that the climate-denier-in-chief would suddenly transform into a climate champion. Right from the start, this administration started rolling back critical protections for clean air and clean water, promoting massive new fossil fuel developments, and systematically attacking the role of sound science in federal policymaking. President Trump even claimed that wind turbines cause cancer and more recently, that the climate will magically start cooling.

But in the midst of all the chaos, there were glimmers of hope that leadership at the Department of the Interior actually understood the enormous economic benefits of renewable energy.

Secretary Zinke came in on horseback promoting a so-called all-of-the-above vision of energy dominance. He published an op-ed promising that “on designated federal lands and offshore, this means an equal opportunity for all sources of responsible energy development, from fossil fuels to the full range of renewables.”

In a speech, Secretary Zinke said “I’m bullish on wind” and “I think this is a win for America.”

President Trump's executive order promoting energy independence specifically mentioned opportunities for renewable energy.

And there has been some progress. But the results have not matched the rhetoric.

We are not dominating the world in renewable energy – in fact, we're a distant second to China in renewable energy investment. And we're rapidly going backwards on climate change.

These problems were pre-baked into this administration well before the coronavirus pandemic disrupted all of our lives.

For example, immediately upon coming into office the Trump administration dismantled the Renewable Energy Coordination Office at the Department of the Interior, casting aside years of clean energy expertise.

Vineyard Wind, which is expected to become the nation's first large-scale offshore wind farm, has been delayed by over a year and a half. This has led to a cascading series of delays for other projects that are similarly awaiting BOEM permits.

For over two years BOEM has promised it would open new areas in New York and California for offshore wind development, but those efforts have mysteriously stalled.

The picture isn't much better on land. While the Trump administration has offered over twenty-four million acres for oil and gas leasing at dirt-cheap prices, they haven't held any competitive lease sales for wind or solar.

In the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, when the BLM was scrambling to provide royalty breaks for oil and gas companies as quick as they could, BLM demanded millions of dollars' in rental payments from wind and solar companies.

The starkly different ways that this administration treats oil and gas compared to renewable energy couldn't be any clearer. Time and time again, they favor fossil fuels and they scorn renewable energy. Any progress whatsoever on renewable energy over the past four years is thanks to state leadership and private sector companies working tooth and nail to overcome obstacle after obstacle thrown their way by the Trump administration.

Both the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management were invited to testify at today's hearing but they refused to show up.

There is no excuse for this lack of urgency. Every year that we fail to make progress on clean energy increases costs to future generations in addressing climate change. It's also an enormous missed opportunity to create jobs and help our nation recover from the ongoing economic recession.

Today's hearing is an opportunity to hear from experts on how we can once again jumpstart our clean energy transition in ways that are environmentally sustainable, equitable, and will create jobs all across the country.

I now recognize Ranking Member Gosar for his opening statement.