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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce Full Committee Markup of H.R. 5019, the Home Star Energy Retrofit Act of 2010; H.R. 5026, the Grid Reliability and Infrastructure Defense (GRID) Act; H.R. 4451, the Collinsville Renewable Energy Promotion Act; and a Resolution to fill Vacancies in Republican Membership on Several Subcommittees April 15, 2010

Today, the Committee considers three pieces of legislation to boost building energy efficiency, protect the electric grid, and encourage the development of sustainable hydroelectric power.

The first piece of legislation is the bipartisan GRID Act to protect the electric grid from cyber, electromagnetic pulse, and physical attacks, as well as from solar storms. Mr. Markey and Mr. Upton formally introduced this bill yesterday as H.R. 5026, but the substance of the bill was forwarded from the Subcommittee on Energy and Environment by voice vote with a recommendation that the bill pass.

This has been a good bipartisan process. The majority and minority staffs have worked closely together for months to develop this legislation. They have had extensive discussions with interested stakeholders and agencies. It has been a cooperative process that has produced strong bipartisan legislation.

This bipartisan legislation will provide the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) with the authorities it needs to address imminent threats to the electric grid with emergency orders. It also directs the Commission to address longer-term grid vulnerabilities with standards written or approved by the Commission.

This is an important national security and grid reliability issue. We've heard from the Defense Department – and from former Defense Secretaries, National Security Advisors, and CIA Directors. They've told us that this bill is critical to our national security. I encourage my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation.

The second piece of legislation is known as HomeStar. This legislation would achieve the dual goals of jumpstarting jobs in our construction and manufacturing sectors while helping Americans make their homes more energy efficient.

This legislation was reported favorably from Subcommittee last month and was introduced by Peter Welch just yesterday as H.R. 5019. I'd like to commend Representative Welch for his hard work in pushing to make this legislation a reality. I'd also like to commend those members whose ideas were incorporated into the legislation at Subcommittee, including Chairman Markey, and Representatives Baldwin, Shimkus, and Shadegg.

HomeStar would establish a rebate program for the installation of energy efficient home upgrades. These rebates would encourage homeowners to hire contractors to install new heating and air conditioning systems, insulate their homes, and replace drafty windows and doors. That creates jobs, saves consumers money, and cuts pollution.

HomeStar has the support of a remarkably broad coalition that ranges from your local contractor to environmentalists to window manufacturers to major trade associations like the National Association of Manufacturers. These groups all support HomeStar because it's a commonsense program that's good for the country.

During the Committee process on this legislation, a number of members have raised the question about how this program would be paid for. It is a good question and one that Congress will need to answer as this legislation moves to the floor. Our job as the authorizing Committee is to perfect the language creating the program, which is what we are doing today.

I urge all members to help us get to that point by supporting the HomeStar legislation.

Finally, the third piece of legislation is a bill sponsored by Chris Murphy of Connecticut. The bill would authorize the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to reinstate licenses for two hydroelectric projects on the Farmington River and to transfer these licenses to the town of Canton, Connecticut. After a private company lost the licenses because it failed to begin construction, the town decided to proceed with these projects, which would use existing dams to generate electricity. Mr. Murphy worked extensively with the relevant agencies and stakeholders on this legislation, including Canton and nearby towns, local and national environmental organizations, FERC, and the state regulators. The bill allows FERC to get these projects licensed expeditiously while ensuring that the appropriate environmental analysis is completed and considered. This bill was forwarded from the Subcommittee by voice vote with a recommendation that it pass. I encourage my colleagues to support this balanced bill.

Today's legislation presents an opportunity for us all to work together. I urge all members to seize that opportunity.