

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Full Committee Markup
July 21, 2010

Today the Committee will consider five bills.

H.R. 3101, “The 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010” brings digital technology and media to the disabilities community. This bill is civil rights legislation for the 21st century. We should do everything we can to ensure that all Americans have access to the tremendous opportunities the Internet provides.

I want to thank Mr. Markey, Boucher, Barton, and Stearns, as well as their staff, for supporting this effort and helping us get to this point in a truly bipartisan fashion

This bill, while not perfect, has consensus support from both sides of the aisle, the disabilities community, and numerous industry groups.

Throughout this process, we have worked closely with all stakeholders to make improvements and find the creative solutions and flexibility that our evolving technology sector requires.

I am especially pleased with the changes we made to the video description section and the eventual inclusion of all television markets throughout the United States. Thanks to this legislation, blind individuals throughout the country will have access to video described programming.

This legislation will make a significant difference in the lives of millions of Americans. I hope we can complete our work in the House to mark the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act next week, and move together with the Senate to get a bill to the President in short order.

H.R. 5156, the Clean Energy Technology Manufacturing and Export Assistance Act, introduced by Ms. Matsui, will ensure that clean energy technology firms have the information and assistance they need to be competitive at home and abroad. The United States should have a greater share of the large and growing market for clean energy technology, and this bill advances that strategic goal.

This bill provides funds for the International Trade Administration (ITA) to promote policies that reduce production costs and encourage innovation, investment, and productivity. The bill also directs ITA to implement a national clean energy technology export strategy. I thank Ms. Matsui for bringing this bill to the Committee and urge my colleagues to support it.

H.R. 4692, the National Manufacturing Strategy Act, mandates the development of a national manufacturing strategy. Manufacturing is critical to our economy, yet over the past ten years we have lost a third of United States manufacturing jobs. This bill provides a comprehensive analysis of our manufacturing sector, coupled with an ongoing strategy that sets out short- and long-term goals for manufacturing and recommendations for achieving those goals.

I would like to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their contributions to this bill, and I will be offering a substitute amendment that incorporates many of those suggestions.

The “Foreign Manufacturer Legal Accountability Act,” introduced by Ms. Sutton, establishes state and federal court jurisdiction over foreign manufacturers who send to the U.S. finished products and component parts for assembly here. It’s no secret that the vast majority of recalls in recent years of defective or dangerous products have involved goods from overseas. Foreign manufacturers are willing to take advantage of the opportunity to sell in the U.S, but often fight to avoid the responsibilities with respect to safety and legal liability that apply to U.S. companies. This bill changes that. If foreign manufacturers do business in the U.S., then they will have to do so on the same footing as U.S. companies that manufacture and sell products here.

Finally, H.R. 3655, the “Bereaved Consumer’s Bill of Rights,” is a priority for Subcommittee Chairman Bobby Rush, and I am pleased to bring it before the Committee. Grieving families arranging services, cremations, or burials for lost loved ones are at risk of being treated unfairly at an especially vulnerable time. Most families in this situation are not familiar with the funeral and burial industry. They are not price shopping and cannot use prior experience as consumers to guide them as they make decisions.

This legislation would address the risk of potential fraud, deception, and unfair practices by establishing minimum standards for consumer protection across the funeral industry. The Federal Trade Commission already enforces the funeral rule, which requires funeral homes to present price lists and provide certain essential information to families planning funerals. This legislation would extend that type of protection to consumers dealing with cemeteries, crematoria, and sellers of funeral goods such as caskets and memorial stones.

This is important legislation that will fill a gap in consumer protection. I urge my colleagues to support it.