

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on Discussion Draft of H.R. ___, the “No More Solyndras Act” and Discussion
Draft of H.R. ___, the “Smart Energy Act”
Subcommittee on Energy and Power and Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
July 12, 2012

Mr. Chairman, my colleagues, members of the audience, Mr. Dingell is absolutely right. This is a hearing for politics. That’s all it is. And I guess it’s an election year so we can excuse it, but this nation faces an urgent energy challenge. The recent wildfires, drought, heat waves, and extreme weather events tell us that we must act to address climate change. These are exactly the types of extreme events that scientists have been predicting ... and that Congress has been ignoring.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, more than 40,000 hot temperature records have been set this year. At the end of June of this year, more than 100 million people in the U.S. were in areas under extreme heat advisories. Two-thirds of the country is experiencing drought. More than 2 million acres have burned in wildfires this year.

We need to act to reduce carbon pollution, and there are a range of options for doing that – from putting a price on carbon ... to sensible regulations ... to incentives for clean energy.

But House Republicans oppose every potential solution. They say “no” to market-based solutions like cap-and-trade. “No” to cost-effective regulations. “No” to loan guarantees or financial incentives for clean energy – even if they would improve our nation’s global competitiveness.

They even say “no” to simply understanding the problem. Rep. Rush and I have written to Chairman Upton and Chairman Whitfield fifteen times this year to request hearings on various climate change reports and topics. We have yet to even get the courtesy of a response.

Denying the science and refusing to recognize the laws of nature is completely irresponsible.

Regrettably, today’s bills are just more examples of the same.

No one should mistake the loan guarantee bill we will be considering for a serious effort at reforming the program. In fact, most of the bill is composed of inaccurate and misleading congressional findings.

I'm sorry Solyndra happened. We lost \$500 million dollars. That's a shame, but that's why loan guarantees are provided, because these are risky enterprises and not all of them are going to succeed. But there has been no showing of wrong-doing by anybody in this Administration due to the Solyndra loan loss. No showing of wrong-doing, despite the claims being made by the Republicans. There's no evidence for it.

So what are they proposing? Legislation that would, they say, end this loan guarantee program, but would instead provide billions of dollars still to be used. But they do it in a way that would ignore the best possible technologies. They create a winner's list of about 50 projects that are eligible, and if any new idea comes up in this year or next, it wouldn't even be eligible to seek a loan guarantee.

Even the technologies that Republicans claim to support are abandoned. If an application for a small modular nuclear reactor or a next-generation nuclear plant is submitted, DOE is required to reject it.

I don't think this is a way forward. I don't think this a way to address the problem.

Energy efficiency is an essential part of any serious plan to address climate change. It is a low-hanging fruit that reduces pollution while saving Americans money and creating jobs. Whether it is building codes or appliance standards or industrial efficiency improvements, we should be doing much more in this area. And yet we're not moving forward with any energy efficiency opportunities.

Both of the bills we will be considering have serious flaws. We need to step outside the bubble of being in Washington and being consumed by the quest for political power and recognize the havoc that extreme weather is causing around the nation. Then we need to develop solutions to climate change and the real energy challenges facing our nation.