

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Whitfield
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Hearing on the “Benefits of and Challenges to Energy Access
in the 21st Century: Fuel Supply and Infrastructure”
March 6, 2014**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

North America’s oil and natural gas output has been growing since 2007, and the Energy Information Administration expects continued increases in the years ahead. This poses a challenge to the nation’s existing energy infrastructure – be it pipelines, railroads, or trucking. For one thing, this infrastructure is being called upon to carry more energy than ever before. For another, most of it does not serve the areas where energy production is rapidly increasing, such as the oil-rich Bakken formation in North Dakota and the gas fields in Pennsylvania.

There is no question that the energy boom is great news for the U.S. But without an infrastructure boom to match it, the benefits of our energy abundance will not be fully realized.

Recent events have shown the energy infrastructure to be under strain. For example, very tight natural gas supplies and high prices in New England during this very cold winter were not caused by any actual shortages but by the limited pipeline capacity serving that region. And the low supplies of propane that hit my district and many rural areas throughout the Midwest were attributable in part to the fact that we now have booming production of crude oil that is competing for space on trains and trucks with other commodities like propane.

And I might add that the trains in turn are overburdened with oil in part because oil pipeline capacity has not been able to expand to keep up with rising production. So each element of our infrastructure system is interconnected with the others. Indeed, just as we benefit from energy diversity – coal, oil, natural gas, nuclear, and renewables – we also benefit from infrastructure diversity, but only if each mode of transport is allowed to expand to meet current and future demand.

Unfortunately, the Obama administration has been considerably less than proactive in addressing our infrastructure challenges. We are all familiar with the administration’s 5 year-long delay in approving the Keystone XL pipeline expansion project. And Keystone is indicative of a larger indifference if not hostility towards infrastructure upgrades, especially those that carry fossil fuels. I fear that the Keystone XL delays and other instances of infrastructure obstructionism may be a part of the administration’s climate agenda.

Compounding Keystone XL and other project delays are proposed regulatory actions that may make it much harder to transport oil and other fuels by rail. We need regulations that facilitate the safe transportation of energy rather than limit it.

The House is already acting to address several infrastructure bottlenecks. In addition to passing H.R. 3 to greenlight Keystone XL, we have also passed H.R. 1900, the “Natural Gas Permitting Reform Act,” that would expedite and streamline future natural gas pipeline approvals. And this Committee has introduced H.R. 3301, the “North American Energy Infrastructure Act,” to reduce unnecessary red tape for approvals of energy projects that cross the Canadian or Mexican border and thus help create a more integrated North American energy infrastructure.

And we continue to consider other measures that would help give this nation a more robust 21st century energy infrastructure. I look forward to hearing from representatives of the pipeline, railroad, and trucking industries as well as others to give their perspective on what else is needed. Thank you.

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