

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Whitfield  
Subcommittee on Energy and Power  
Hearing on “H.R. \_\_\_\_, “Title II: 21st Century Workforce”  
April 23, 2015**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

I would like to thank my good friend Bobby Rush as well as Bill Flores, Gene Green, and Richard Hudson, for sponsoring the bipartisan discussion draft that we will be talking about today, entitled 21st Century Workforce. This discussion draft will become part of our larger energy legislation that we will be rolling out in the weeks ahead. I also thank our witnesses for appearing before us today.

As we all know, the domestic energy sector is undergoing dramatic changes. Thanks to American innovations in hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling, decades of declining oil and natural gas production have given way to tremendous increases in output. The Energy Information Administration (EIA) recently projected that the U.S. will eliminate net energy imports by 2030. This abundant and affordable energy is sparking new manufacturing activity in the U.S.

America's energy and manufacturing renaissance is also leading to a jobs renaissance. Energy and energy-related employment has been one of the few economic bright spots in recent years – everything from those employed discovering and producing energy, to those constructing and operating the infrastructure to transport it, to the new factories that are powered by it.

But America's energy transformation has taken the job market by surprise. Many in need of work do not have the skills required to fill these high-paying opportunities, and the Department of Energy's job programs do not fully reflect current realities.

That is the problem the 21st Century Workforce discussion draft seeks to address. It updates DOE's energy training programs to better serve today's energy market and today's job seekers.

Just as America's energy situation is changing, so is its workforce. We have growing numbers of minorities participating in labor markets, but these groups have been historically underrepresented in the energy sector. The 21st Century Workforce bill would strengthen the outreach to these potential energy workers. Our goal is nothing less than to have the best trained and most diverse energy industry in the world.

In addition, there are displaced workers, such as those once employed in the coal sector, who are now looking for new opportunities in energy. Of course, my hope is to get as many of these men and women employed again in the coal industry, but for the others the discussion draft has programs to help them transition into other energy careers.

The discussion draft does not create new programs out of whole cloth, but builds upon the base that already exists at DOE. And it applies to a wide variety of programs and partnerships with 4-year colleges, community and technical colleges, and high schools as well as other governmental and private institutions involved in energy.

Now, I know that on this subcommittee we don't always agree on which energy source is the best. We have proponents of wind and solar as well as proponents of fossil fuels and nuclear power. However, this discussion draft is fuel neutral - it does not seek to target any particular energy source, but rather gives DOE the flexibility to allocate its resources to wherever the job opportunities are. And the focus goes well beyond energy production to also include downstream opportunities such as those in infrastructure that were highlighted in DOE's recent Quadrennial Energy Review as well as those in the manufacturing sector that are made possible by affordable domestic energy.

Energy and energy-related jobs are critical to American economic growth in the years ahead. The career opportunities are many, and the 21st Century Workforce discussion draft will go a long way towards ensuring that we have qualified Americans to fill them.

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