

Opening Statement
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Energy
Hearing on “Saving Energy: Legislation to Improve Energy Efficiency and Storage”
February 12, 2020

I would like to begin by welcoming back to the Committee Undersecretary Menezes who served as a key staffer on the Committee on energy matters for many years.

Today the Subcommittee will review six bipartisan bills that continue our work to combat the climate crisis by improving energy efficiency and investing in battery storage infrastructure.

Energy efficiency is a critical tool in our effort to address climate change, while also saving consumers money on their electric bills. Residential and commercial buildings contribute nearly 40 percent to our nation’s carbon pollution. Today we are considering several bills that support the use of energy efficiency technologies in residential, commercial and industrial sectors.

Representatives Welch and McKinley have introduced H.R. 3962, the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act, which includes a suite of measures to make buildings, manufacturers and the federal government more energy efficient. The bill strengthens national building codes to ensure new homes and buildings are more energy efficient, and it helps manufacturers and the federal government transition to technologies that will reduce energy consumption.

While there are many important provisions in this bill, there are a few provisions that concern me. The bill repeals section 433 of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, which phases out the use of fossil fuel energy in federal buildings by 2030. To achieve a 100 percent clean economy, the federal government must lead by reducing its energy consumption and carbon pollution, and I cannot support walking away from this strong standard. I am also uncomfortable allowing companies to self-certify that their products meet ENERGY STAR standards. Consumers must have certainty that an ENERGY STAR product they buy will actually save the amount of energy a company claims it will.

The Subcommittee will also review H.R. 5650, the Federal Energy and Water Management Performance Act, introduced by Representatives Welch and Kinzinger. The federal government is the nation’s largest energy buyer and consumer. This bill will drive major energy and water use reductions in federal buildings over the next decade.

We are also considering H.R. 5758, the Ceiling Fan Improvement Act of 2020, which was introduced by Representatives Guthrie and Schakowsky. This legislation provides a technical fix for large-diameter ceiling fan efficiency standards.

The Subcommittee will also review three energy storage bills to speed up adoption of this important technology. Building new energy storage infrastructure is critical to expanding renewable energy technology use. As the United States brings online more wind, solar and other renewables, energy storage is key to providing reliable electric service.

Today we will be reviewing Representative Casten's H.R. 2909, the Promoting Grid Storage Act. This bill establishes programs and grants for energy storage research, technical assistance, and storage system pilot projects. H.R. 1744, the STORAGE Act, introduced by Representative Takano, amends the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 (PURPA) to require states to consider energy storage when developing energy plans. And H.R. 4447, the EASE Act, introduced by Representatives O'Halleran and Mullin which sets up a grant program to assist rural electric cooperatives with energy storage and microgrid projects.

This Committee will continue to work in a bipartisan fashion to boost energy efficiency, cut carbon pollution and reduce consumer's bills, but unfortunately the Trump Administration is moving in the opposite direction with the budget it released this week. The Trump budget cuts clean energy research, guts funding for the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy by an appalling 75 percent, and zeroes out weatherization assistance for low-income homeowners. These are all devastating cuts that would seriously undermine our ability to combat the climate crisis.

Despite this Administration's ongoing denial of the climate crisis, this Committee will continue its work to modernize energy infrastructure, reduce carbon pollution and make homes, businesses and federal buildings more energy efficient. We have six bipartisan bills before us that accomplish all these goals, and I commend the bill sponsors for their hard work.