

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.**

Hearing on “Offshore Wind, Onshore Benefits: Growing the Domestic Wind Energy Industry”

October 21, 2021

Today we are going to discuss the growing potential of the offshore wind industry to power American homes with clean energy. The industry’s growth also provides us a real opportunity to revitalize manufacturing and port communities throughout the nation.

This hearing is not only important, but timely. Earlier this year, President Biden restored American leadership in the fight against the climate crisis by announcing an ambitious goal of deploying 30 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity by 2030. Achieving this goal will provide clean power to ten million American households and avoid 78 million metric tons of carbon emissions.

This is not only critical to our efforts to combat the climate crisis, but it would also mean major investments in domestic manufacturing and supply chains, including U.S.-flagged shipping and ship building. These investments would help create tens of thousands of good-paying jobs for blue collar workers.

In fact, communities across the nation are already seeing the incredible benefits of investing in offshore wind, and nowhere is that truer than in my home state of New Jersey. Just this year, New Jersey has spurred development of more than 2,600 megawatts of offshore wind capacity. Our state is also constructing the first purpose-built Wind Port in the nation, bringing thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in investment to the Garden State.

But to be clear, the economic benefits of offshore wind won’t just accrue on the coasts, they will impact communities across the country. A study released last week estimated that achieving the Biden Administration’s offshore wind goals would generate \$109 billion in economic activity. Additionally, the Business Network for Offshore Wind has identified more than 600 domestic supply contracts for offshore wind components to be built by companies throughout the United States.

Offshore wind also holds significant promise for American workers. Achieving the Biden Administration’s goals will support 80,000 jobs by 2030, including good paying union jobs in construction, steel fabrication, welding, and many other fields. But we need to make sure that the rising tide of offshore wind lifts all boats, so I look forward to hearing how workforce development efforts can ensure that local and disadvantaged communities reap the benefits of development.

The offshore wind industry has great potential for growth, and that's particularly important in a rapidly changing world where fossil fuels are increasingly unreliable and subject to huge price swings. We've witnessed this from the global volatility of oil and gas prices, from the unreliability of gas during the Texas Winter storm, and from the hack of the Colonial oil pipeline. Doubling down on existing fossil fuel infrastructure makes little sense. We must invest in mechanisms that reliably bring energy to consumers.

That is why I am proud that the Build Back Better Act passed by this Committee last month included significant funding for transmission, including for offshore wind. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about the measures the federal government can take to ensure we build a backbone transmission system capable of delivering reliable offshore wind energy to American households and businesses.

Rapidly expanding offshore wind will be critical to decarbonizing the power sector. I am excited about the progress in New Jersey and other states in the Northeast, and I hope that same momentum can spread to other offshore areas throughout the country. We cannot rely on existing trends or wishful thinking to get us to net-zero electricity sector emissions, and that's why the investments in the Build Back Better Act are so critical in our efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

I welcome all four of our witnesses here today, including a former member of my staff. Heather Zichal was my environmental legislative assistant and then legislative director about 20 years ago before she moved over to the Senate. She then served as a senior advisor to President Obama and is now the CEO of the American Clean Power Association. Welcome back, Heather.

I look forward to our overall discussion today.