



COMMITTEE ON *DEMOCRATS*  
**ENERGY & COMMERCE**  
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Statement by Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr., submitted for the record  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade  
Hearing on “H.R. 985, Concrete Masonry Products Research, Education, and  
Promotion Act of 2015”**

Today this Subcommittee is holding a hearing to examine a request of the concrete masonry products industry for Congress to create a concrete block check-off program.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, 1.4 billion concrete blocks and pavers are sold every year. These blocks are used in homes, schools, and buildings across the nation. And these are U.S. companies, contributing to thousands of jobs here in the United States. As our witnesses will explain today, concrete masonry products are heavy and therefore expensive to ship, so these are local jobs in many of our Congressional districts.

Concrete is also a valuable and durable option as a building material. Concrete masonry is resistant to fire and rot. And buildings that are constructed from concrete masonry can resist the extreme winds that come with hurricanes. As I am witnessing firsthand after the devastation of Superstorm Sandy, concrete block is being used in the rebuilding of the New Jersey shore. Strong buildings can save personal property and lives.

The bill we are reviewing today, H.R. 985, would establish a Concrete Masonry Products Board that would require the collection of assessments—a fee of between one and five cents on each unit of concrete masonry sold—to fund programs and activities that would promote the concrete masonry industry and educate consumers about the benefits of concrete masonry products.

This concrete initiative is expected to function similarly to other research and education programs, also known as check-offs, that are known to consumers through familiar ad campaigns for various agricultural products; for example, “Got Milk?” and “Cotton: The Fabric of Our Lives.”

Creating a concrete masonry check-off program has generated a good deal of member interest. And I credit the industry for bringing the issue to so many members.

In the past, I have supported programs to fund research, development, and education for a given industry. And while no one doubts the benefits and attributes of concrete block, and everyone wants job creation and better consumer products, some have expressed concerns about this check-off and check-off programs in general.

Therefore, I hope this hearing will explore several issues including how to ensure that this type of check-off program would not increase home prices and ultimately price people out of the new-home market. I also want to explore how to ensure this check-off is fair to concrete masonry's competitors, as some have suggested is already a concern with regard to the existing and pending wood industry check-offs.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to hearing more about the proposed concrete masonry check-off program, as well as other check-off programs. I hope we can continue to look for ways to work together to promote job growth while ensuring there are not unintended consequences.

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