

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Hearing on “Discussion Drafts Addressing Hydropower Regulatory Modernization and
FERC Process Coordination under the Natural Gas Act”
May 13, 2015

(As Prepared for Delivery)

The work on our bipartisan energy legislation continues, and to date the areas of agreement have significantly outweighed the areas of disagreement. I expect that trend to continue today as the subcommittee addresses two key topics, hydropower and natural gas pipelines, where I believe there is common ground on the direction the nation should be taking.

The Department of Energy’s Quadrennial Energy Review (QER) set the stage by highlighting the transformative potential of American energy as well as the need for permitting reform in order for that potential to be realized. The administration’s report noted the economic, energy security, and environmental benefits of energy sources like hydropower and natural gas, particularly when it is efficiently delivered through modern infrastructure. The QER recommended changes to existing policies in order to achieve these goals, and I believe the two discussion drafts today fit in well with the message from the administration.

Hydropower and natural gas are both critical sources of energy and jobs in Michigan and across the country, but the federal process of licensing hydroelectric facilities and permitting interstate gas pipelines has grown far more cumbersome than necessary. The discussion drafts clear away the red tape and add increasing amounts of transparency so all stakeholders are aware of the process, which will help to pave the way for additional needed energy from these sources.

Both discussion drafts place the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in charge, and require it to set clear deadlines that all other agencies involved must meet. The end result is a more timely and certain permitting process for hydroelectric power and gas pipeline approvals. At the same time, all environmental and public safety provisions are left intact.

There will surely be points of debate, but I am also sure that we will be able to achieve resolution to most differences.

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