

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Hearing on the American Energy Initiative
May 9, 2012
(As Prepared for Delivery)

We have before us today two very important pieces of bipartisan energy legislation. I want to commend my colleagues for their hard work and for reaching across the aisle to find common ground in developing these bills.

Ms. McMorris Rodgers and Ms. DeGette worked together to develop a critical piece of hydropower legislation: the Hydropower Regulatory Efficiency Act of 2012.

Hydropower is the nation's largest renewable energy resource, and the bill before us today will help facilitate the development of new hydropower resources. It accomplishes that goal without new subsidies or deficit spending – instead, it cuts through the red tape to make it easier for this renewable resource to come online to power our communities. This is what “all of the above” is all about.

This in turn will stimulate job growth as new hydropower resources are constructed and operated, while the electricity produced by these new projects will provide low-cost power to American homes and businesses.

This legislation has great promise for increased hydropower development, including for the state of Michigan, which has significant potential for small hydro projects. In addition, Michigan manufacturers produce many of the components vital to the hydropower industry, enhancing the positive economic benefits.

The other bill under consideration today is the Resolving Environmental and Grid Reliability Conflicts Act of 2012, authored by Mr. Olson, Mr. Doyle, and Mr. Green.

It is clear that the nation's generation fleet will be undergoing a significant shift over the next several years and beyond. Although we may often disagree on why this is occurring or what the impacts will be, we should all be able to agree that ensuring the reliable supply of electricity is paramount.

That's why H.R. 4273 is such a critical piece of legislation. This bill protects our nation's electricity producers from being penalized or sued for violating a conflicting environmental law when they have been directed by the federal government to operate during an emergency.

The government cannot have it both ways. It cannot direct a generator to operate for emergency purposes and then turn around and fine them for doing so. It's like having one police officer telling you to speed up, while another sits at the end of the street to give you a ticket. It's simply not fair, which is why I am pleased that our colleagues have developed bipartisan legislation to resolve this conflict.

Again let me emphasize how pleased I am to see both sides of the aisle working together to bring before this committee two more examples of strong bipartisan energy legislation.

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