

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Whitfield**  
**Subcommittee on Energy and Power**  
**Hearing on “The American Energy Initiative: A Focus on H.R. 6172”**  
**September 20, 2012**  
*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

Today we are holding the twenty-ninth day of our American Energy Initiative hearing. We will be focusing on H.R. 6172, which would prohibit EPA’s proposed New Source Performance Standard (NSPS) for greenhouse gases from being finalized until it is technologically and economically feasible. I applaud my friend and colleague David McKinley for spearheading this important effort.

It is now clear to everyone that the Obama administration intends to limit or eliminate the use of coal for electricity generation. Any doubts about this have been erased by the mounting casualties, including mine closings, power plant shutdowns, and associated layoffs that are being announced on an almost weekly basis. Most recently, Alpha Natural Resources has said it will close eight coal mines and lay off of up to 1,200 employees. And the bad news for those who depend on coal just keeps on coming.

And given the fact that several of EPA’s anti-coal regulations have yet to go into effect, this situation is only going to intensify, and the job losses and electricity price increases and threats to reliability are only going to become more severe in the years ahead. Nonetheless, the Obama administration still denies that it is opposed to the use of coal.

But those denials become even more far-fetched in light of EPA’s proposed NSPS for greenhouse gases from fossil fuel-fired electric generating units. The reason is that this rule would effectively mandate carbon capture and storage (CCS) for new units – a technology that is currently a very long way from widespread use and for which a great many questions remain unanswered. In my view, the proposed rule amounts to nothing less than an outright ban on new coal-fired power plants, and one that could later be extended to existing plants as well.

That is why this bill, or something like it, is so critical. The bottom line is that the federal government would have to be on record that what it is requiring of coal-fired power plants is achievable in the real world. Of course, this is something regulators should be doing without having to be told. And in fact this bill does nothing more than bring back a common sense approach to regulation.

Coal, historically our largest fuel source for electricity generation, has been a major focus of EPA’s regulatory agenda ever since it was created in 1970. For all those years, EPA has regulated coal in a manner that reduced emissions but allowed its ongoing use. And it did so under both Democratic and Republican administrations. Indeed, the track record shows that the nation can continue using coal while cleaning up the air we breathe.

Only under President Obama have we seen the unprecedented step of coal being targeted for extinction. And given that coal is America’s most abundant energy source, the stakes could not be higher.

The sad thing about this bill is that it shouldn’t be necessary, but under the Obama EPA it is. H.R. 6172 is important to the future viability of American coal, and for that reason is important to the future of the American economy.

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