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Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton

Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs

Hearing on “Oversight of the Biden Administration’s Pause on Liquefied Natural Gas Exports”

April 18, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Fallon, and thank you to the witness for being with us here today.

As a matter of good government, I have always held that Congress should use the most up-to-date facts and analysis when crafting policy. I would expect federal agencies to do the same. Members of Congress should encourage agencies to study issues before making consequential policy choices. Outdated data leads to outdated policy.

Back in January, when the Department of Energy (DOE) paused future permits for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) export terminals they did so with the goal of making better policy.

DOE is taking the opportunity to update its public interest analysis to include current economic, climate change, and global energy security considerations. Over the last five years, global events and new research have shifted the economic and environmental factors that DOE should consider when making LNG export facility permitting determinations.

DOE must also closely scrutinize the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the LNG production lifecycle and its disproportionate effect on minority communities.

The Biden-Harris Administration has wisely pumped the brakes on new permits to examine all potential effects on the American people.

This temporary and limited pause on permits will in no way affect our ability to assist allies across the globe.

To help defund Vladimir Putin’s war of aggression against Ukraine, the United States has stepped up export capacity to meet our European allies’ energy needs. DOE has already approved permits to supply enough LNG to support Europe—with capacity to spare.

New research indicates that producing LNG emits more greenhouse gases than previously estimated. Natural gas system leaks spew greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. New satellite measurements reveal that prior estimates fell woefully short of understanding the scope of LNG production’s environmental impact.

Previous analyses also failed to account for the disproportionate damage LNG export projects have on disadvantaged communities. These export projects emit toxic gases that can increase cancer and lung disease risks. Yet corporations, focused solely on profits, keep building new export sites near low-income and minority communities.

I applaud DOE's work to take a moment to update their research related to these projects. As part of the President's Justice40 Initiative, these studies must focus on decreasing the energy and environmental burden on disadvantaged communities.

The Biden-Harris Administration has not chosen to stymie industry. It seeks simply to carve a policy path forward using up-to-date research and evidence. Using science and facts is not anti-energy, it is pro-people, pro-communities, and just common sense.

This hearing makes a mountain out of a mole hill. The permitting pause affects only export projects awaiting approval from DOE. DOE has already authorized permits for facilities that, when operational, will amount to a 600% increase in LNG capacity. Moreover, DOE leadership does not expect this pause to last more than a year.

We are all here today talking about a drop in the LNG export bucket compared to the massive expansion in export capacity the Biden-Harris Administration has already enabled.

This whole endeavor is just one more chapter in the majority's false claim that the Biden-Harris Administration is waging some sort of "war on energy."

I once again return to the facts, which show that the United States has never produced more fossil fuels than right now. LNG export capacity has increased by more than thirty percent since 2021.

More importantly, this Administration and Congressional Democrats have made historic investments in clean energy through the Inflation Reduction Act, which will reduce energy costs for American families, invest in a healthier future and combat climate change by bringing us closer to a 100% renewable energy future.

I follow the facts and listen to experts. The Biden-Harris Administration has committed to do the same. The natural gas permitting pause is just that, a pause to gather more evidence to make sure our policies are the right ones.

I do not understand why some of my colleagues object to evidence-based policymaking. Maybe they would rather have this hearing than working with the Administration to move beyond harmful fossil fuels like LNG and support policies that embrace renewable energy sources.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

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