

Chairman Robert Latta
Opening Statement—Subcommittee on Energy
“Strengthening American Energy: A Review of Pipeline Safety
Policy.”
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Welcome to today’s hearing, “Strengthening American Energy: A Review of Pipeline Safety Policy.” And thank you to our witness for your participation.

Today, we will examine the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration’s (PHMSA) pipeline safety program.

PHMSA is a Department of Transportation agency tasked with developing and enforcing federal safety regulations for the nation’s onshore pipeline infrastructure and the transportation of hazardous materials.

The witnesses before us represent different segments of PHMSA’s regulated community and can provide important perspectives on the reauthorization of PHMSA.

Pipelines are the safest and most efficient mode of transportation for oil, natural gas, liquid energy products, and hazardous materials, and they play an instrumental role in delivering the products that drive our nation’s economy forward.

The agency has about 3.3 million miles of pipelines under its purview. In order to ensure these pipelines are operated in a safe and reliable manner, PHMSA partners and coordinates with States to administer pipeline safety programs and inspect infrastructure within a state's boundaries.

PHMSA was last authorized in the Protecting Our Infrastructure of Pipelines and Enhancing Safety Act (PIPES) of 2020, through Fiscal Year 2023.

I hope we can work in a bipartisan fashion this Congress with our House and Senate colleagues to reauthorize PHMSA to continue carrying out its mission and associated duties. This subcommittee has a responsibility to ensure PHMSA maintains a strong focus on safety and operates within its statutory authorities.

The PIPES Act of 2020 included several statutorily mandated rulemakings that never fully got out the door under the previous administration. Today, the subcommittee will examine implementation of the PIPES Act to ensure PHMSA is on track to carry out Congressional intent in a cost-effective and workable manner.

Additionally, the subcommittee will examine new challenges and opportunities for pipeline safety.

For example, the replacement of aging infrastructure must be a top priority for PHMSA, States, and pipeline operators, but it presents cost and operational challenges.

Especially as energy demand is projected to increase significantly in the immediate future, the upgrading of our natural gas network must be prioritized to ensure the safe transportation of natural gas and other important energy sources and products.

While substantial progress has been made in replacing aging pipes, there is still work to be done. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how PHMSA can best address the remaining 1 percent of iron distribution pipes.

American innovations and new technologies, like artificial intelligence technology, also present opportunities to bolster the quality of risk assessments and advance safety towards our collective goal of zero incidents. However, these technologies will also pose challenges to information and operational security. It is important that a PHMSA reauthorization gives the agency the tools needed to have an effective approach for the opportunities and challenges ahead.

In his confirmation hearing last week, Paul Roberti, President Trump's nominee for PHMSA administrator, committed to pursuing opportunities to utilize new, cost-effective technologies to enhance safety. The subcommittee hopes to collaborate with PHMSA and pipeline operators in this endeavor.

A PHMSA reauthorization must prioritize the improvement of the agency's core responsibility: safety. I am concerned that the previous administration advanced extraneous priorities and set safety to the side. However, President Trump's administration has recommitted to this critical mission, and I hope this Committee can produce a reauthorization that maintains safety as the cornerstone of PHMSA's pipeline safety program.

Pipelines are imperative to public safety and the energy security of our nation. I look forward to hearing from pipeline operators today as we build on American energy leadership.

Thank you, and I yield back.