

Chairman Gary Palmer
Opening Statement—Subcommittee on Environment
“From Gridlock to Growth: Permitting Reform Under the Clean Air Act.”
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As prepared for delivery

Good afternoon, I’d like to welcome everyone to today’s hearing entitled “From Gridlock to Growth: Permitting Reform Under the Clean Air Act.”

This hearing takes place at a critical moment for our country and the Committee. If we want to remain globally competitive, we need meaningful permitting reform. That cannot happen without modernizing the Clean Air Act. The Clean Air Act now accounts for some of the most expensive and significant barriers in the modern permitting process. What’s worse, and what we will hear from the witnesses today, these outdated regulations fail to address the most significant sources of pollution and disincentivize companies from investing in cost-efficient and effective technology.

At the core of the Clean Air Act is the idea that we can protect our environment without sacrificing economic growth. In the decades since it passed, the Act was largely successful in accomplishing this goal. But that success is threatened by outdated provisions that do not function well today.

The Clean Air Act as it stands holds outdated provisions that punish American job creators for emissions they have no control over. It discourages wildfire mitigation measures, threatening this country’s air quality. It risks our economy and national security because of pollution that comes from outside of the US. It threatens our ability to stay competitive in the global AI race. Most importantly, it inhibits the United States’ ability to meet our domestic energy needs.

Americans care about clean air. They also care about rising electricity costs and our economy. They understand that excessive regulation and outdated statutes do not equate to good or effective regulation. They care about technological advancement and not punishing American companies who lead that advancement.

The witnesses we will hear from today have extensive experience with the challenges presented by these outdated provisions and are well suited to explain their impact. I look forward to their testimony and their feedback on the discussion drafts.

In June, we held our first hearing on the need to update the Clean Air Act. At that hearing, we heard testimony about the billion-dollar price tag from Clean Air Act regulations doing little to improve air quality and the state of our economy.

At that hearing, my colleagues across the aisle were critical of the proposals discussed because the reforms were discussed in prior Congresses. They challenged us to introduce novel ideas to reform the Clean Air Act.

It's feedback we took seriously.

I encourage the panel of witnesses before us today to give us their best solutions for modernizing the Clean Air Act. Both novel and previously discussed. Some of these solutions may not be novel. But our permitting problem isn't novel either, and it is not getting better.

35 years have passed since this Committee meaningfully updated the Clean Air Act. It's our job to make sure that legislation passed out of this Chamber is functioning effectively and is updated when needed. Let's take this opportunity to modernize out of date legislation and create an effective permitting program that works for the American people.

I thank the members of this Committee who are leading these efforts, and I hope my colleagues take this opportunity to engage in meaningful permitting reform. Thank you.