

OPENING STATEMENT

We are very pleased to hold this joint hearing today with Congressman Costa so that we can learn more about models designed to get renewable energy resources developed in the West as rapidly as possible. I think one thing everyone in this room can agree on is that America needs to work towards being more energy independent. Where we might not agree is on the best way to do so.

It is believed that the best way to become energy independent is to develop our vast amount of untapped renewable energy resources. These resources could power America's clean energy economy in the future and help us to avoid the disastrous impacts of climate change. Climate change is real and it is one of the single-biggest threats to our planet and to our way of life. While carbon-based energy resources will continue to play a role in providing Americans with their energy in the short-run, we need to strive toward long-term development of a clean energy economy that runs on renewable energy.

Today, we are meeting to learn about new ways to establish our energy independence using renewable energy resources. More commercial development of clean energy resources, such as wind and solar power, will require vast amounts of space, often in remote areas in the West. This

development is especially important in the West as climate change affects the availability of water for our hydroelectric power system.

There are basically two approaches to developing these resources in isolated pockets of the West. The prior Administration had a simple plan: lease as much land as possible, as fast as possible, ignoring the environmental qualities of the lands, cultural sensitivities, and input from regional and local stakeholders. The former Administration also developed transmission corridors in the West that ran roughshod over federally-protected lands in order to provide transmission for the development of more carbon-based power plants.

Today we will hear about an alternative to this plan. Regional approaches, such as the Western Renewable Energy Zones project, California's Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative, and the SunZia Transmission Project are determining where the best clean energy resources are, and are developing them in ways that impact the environment the least, while protecting culturally sacred lands. These processes, which are highlighted by continuous regional and local stakeholder participation and partnership, are easily the best way to develop resources and will undoubtedly lead to faster deployment of clean energy technologies. The reason that these processes will expedite clean energy development is that

they will help minimize, by their inclusiveness, any litigation BEFORE it occurs.

I fully support regional processes that seek full and continuous stakeholder involvement at EVERY STEP because they will help America to become energy independent much sooner and at a smaller cost than the former Administration's energy plan to achieve that goal. This hearing is important because as the Obama Administration continues to move forward in its energy planning, it needs to be made aware of these and other processes and to embrace the positive results they provide.

Thank you. I yield back.