

**REMARKS OF THE HON. ROSA L. DELAURO
KLEEN ENERGY FIELD HEARING
MIDDLETOWN CITY HALL, MIDDLETOWN, CT
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AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY**

Thank you and good morning.

Let me begin thanking today's distinguished panel – Mayor Giuliano, Fire Chief Edward Badamo; the Honorable John Bresland, Chair of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board, Professor Glenn Corbett of the Department of Protection Management at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, the Honorable Alan Nevas, Chair of the Governor's Panel into the Kleen Energy explosion, and Jodi Thomas, whose husband Ron Crabb perished in this terrible explosion.

Thank you for contributing today, and for your broader efforts in the wake of this tragedy. I know local leaders such as Mayor Giuliano and Chief Badamo, as well as representatives from Kleen Energy Systems, have all been working very hard over the past few months to figure out exactly what happened last February. I thank you for your diligence.

Thanks also to my colleagues Chairman George Miller and Chairwoman Lynn Woolsey for agreeing to hold this field hearing of the Workforce Protections Subcommittee here in Middletown, and to Congressmen Joe Courtney, Chris Murphy, and John Larson for being here today. From Day One, the subcommittee has been tremendously responsive and I thank them for their support.

And, of course, thank you to everyone here in the Middletown community who have come together and risen to help the families of those who perished in the tragic Kleen explosion last February. In your compassion and your strength, you have done all of Connecticut proud.

We are here today to examine the causes and circumstances surrounding the awful explosion of February 7, which, as you know, claimed the lives of six men – Ronald Crabb, Peter Chepulis, Raymond Dobratz, Kenneth Haskell, Christopher Walters, and Roy Rushton – and injured over 50 workers at the Kleen Energy plant.

But our task today is not simply one of historical inquiry. To do right by the men who perished in this accident and their colleagues, we must take this incident as an impetus for action. We know this natural gas explosion was not the first of its kind. In 2003, a Fairfield, California plant “gas blow” procedure gone-wrong caused significant property damage, shattering windows a quarter of a mile away, and a 2009 plant explosion in Garner, North Carolina resulted in three deaths and 71 injuries. But if we act this time, we can help ensure the Middletown explosion is one of the last of its kind.

Particularly with 125 more natural gas power plants commissioned to be built over the next five years, it behooves us to explore exactly what went wrong here in Middletown and take the necessary steps to see it does not happen again. I know the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Chemical Safety Board and the Governor's panel have been thoroughly investigating this accident with regulatory action in mind, and I look forward to hearing and reviewing their recommendations.

The fact is we have much to do in the realm of worker safety across the board – an average of fifteen workers per day die from work related incidents, and another 8 to 12 million workers suffer work-related injuries on an annual basis. No doubt there are steps we can take to mitigate these dismal numbers. For example, the Chairwoman has introduced a "*Protecting America's Workers Act*," which grants stronger enforcement capacity to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and which I am glad to co-sponsor.

And we can make sure that regulations exist to protect our working men and women in dangerous jobs and prevent future tragedies such as this. To take just one example: At the moment, natural gas is the only fuel gas not regulated by OSHA, even though its consumption exceeds any other gas fuel.

To take another: The CSB has determined that the "gas blow" procedure is inherently dangerous and should be discontinued in favor of safer alternatives, but, as the Governor's Commission also pointed out in their findings, there is no law, standard, or code on the books to regulate or prohibit this procedure. These seem like exactly the sort of lapses in regulatory oversight that can and should be rectified.

Nobody wants to see any more lives lost. And we all agree that we should do everything in our power to protect our workers. That is why we are here today, to listen, to glean everything we can and to move forward. I thank the panel for being here today, and I look forward to hearing their testimony. Thank you.