

**Opening Statement, Congressman Jim Costa
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
“Getting Past Gridlock: Models for Renewable Energy
Siting and Development”
November 5, 2009**

“Invention,” by Shel Silverstein

from *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (c. 1974)

I've done it, I've done it!

Guess what I've done!

Invented a light that plugs into the sun.

The sun is bright enough,

The bulb is strong enough,

But, oh, there's only one thing wrong....

The cord ain't long enough.

The cord ain't long enough – that problem – the problem of transmission – is a fundamental one confronting all of us who want to aggressively expand renewable resources in our energy portfolio.

Last year, the U.S. Department of Energy concluded that insufficient transmission capacity was the biggest obstacle to meeting 20% of U.S. electricity demand from wind by 2030. Some of the best solar, wind, and geothermal resources are located on public lands, but far from the urban centers where electricity demand is growing.

We began to examine transmission obstacles at a field hearing in Palm Springs in May, including environmental concerns, permitting coordination, and cooperative planning among agencies.

Now, numerous valuable new efforts are underway by the Department of the Interior and the Department of Energy to advance a major renewable energy agenda on federal lands. But, finding the best sites for new grid infrastructure is no small challenge.

I believe that the federal government can often learn from looking at what the states and other stakeholders are doing. This hearing is an opportunity to examine some important models for renewable project siting and transmission.

We are fortunate to have witnesses who have been leaders in my own state of California's Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative, or "RETI." California has a strong renewable portfolio standard – 33% by 2020 – and RETI has taken a thoughtful look at where the solar and wind plants and transmission that will be needed to meet that goal can be sited with the least conflicts.

We also have experts here today on a regional process: the Renewable Energy Zone Project, led by the Western Governors' Association.

Like RETI, the "REZ" process aims to facilitate the permitting of appropriate transmission facilities by resolving contentious environmental issues *early* in the process and bringing all stakeholders to the table.

Hopefully, a good process upfront can mean faster and smarter deployment of renewables on federal lands, with less risk of legal challenges or other delays.

I look forward to the insights of all our witnesses, including those involved in these groundbreaking analyses.