



FROM: Kountoupes Denham Carr & Reid

DATE: Wednesday, March 4, 2026

RE: House Energy & Commerce Energy Subcommittee Hearing titled “America’s Energy Infrastructure: Authorizing Pipeline Safety”

Topline Summary

- The House Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee convened for a hearing to discuss pipeline safety with PHMSA Administrator Paul Roberti.
- The main topics discussed in the hearing included workforce cuts, pending rulemakings, the Special Permit Program, pipeline cybersecurity, interagency coordination and state partnerships, grant funding, and R&D investment in leak and corrosion detection technology.
- Republicans emphasized regulatory streamlining to enable pipeline expansion, reducing duplicative environmental requirements, supporting private investment, and giving the administration flexibility to advance energy security. They were broadly supportive of the draft legislation and Administrator Roberti's leadership direction.
- Democrats raised concerns about declining enforcement activity, workforce reductions, rollback of IJA pipeline improvement grant funding, and PHMSA's emergency permit for the Sable pipeline without adequate environmental review or public comment. They argued the draft legislation weakened oversight and sidelined a bipartisan alternative.

Members Attending: Chairman Bob Latta (R-OH), Vice Chairman Randy Weber (R-TX), Ranking Member Kathy Castor (D-FL), Full Committee Chairman Brett Guthrie (R-KY), Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Rep. Gary Palmer (R-AL), Rep. Rick Allen (R-GA), Rep. Troy Balderson (R-OH), Rep. August Pfluger (R-TX), Rep. Diana Harshbarger (R-TN), Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA), Rep. Russell Fry (R-SC), Rep. Gabe Evans (R-CO), Rep. Julie Fedorchak (R-ND), Rep. Scott Peters (D-CA), Rep. Rob Menendez (D-NJ), Rep. John Joyce (R-PA), Rep. Jennifer McClellan (D-VA), Rep. Doris Matsui (D-CA), Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY), Rep. Marc Veasey (D-TX), Rep. Kim Schrier (D-WA), Rep. Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX), & Rep. Buddy Carter (R-GA)

[Live Hearing Link](#)

Meeting called to order by Chairman Latta.

Opening Statements



Chairman Bob Latta (R-OH): Good morning and welcome to today’s Energy Subcommittee hearing to discuss legislation authorizing the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration’s pipeline safety program.

I’d like to welcome our witness, the Honorable Paul Roberti, Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, or PHMSA, and thank him for appearing before us today.

Your perspective will inform our legislative effort and update us on the Administration’s priorities for maintaining the safety of America’s pipeline infrastructure and enabling the safe expansion of it.

It is good to have a Senate confirmed Administrator leading this vital safety agency after the record long vacancy under the Biden-Harris Administration.

PHMSA is an agency under the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) that develops and enforces federal safety regulations for the nation’s pipeline infrastructure and the transportation of hazardous materials.

PHMSA works closely with industry and pipeline operators to ensure the safe delivery of nation’s most abundant energy resources, from natural gas and crude oil, to propane, jet fuel, gasoline, and other refined petroleum products.

States also play an essential role in carrying out PHMSA’s pipeline safety program, acting as “boots on the ground” to help inspect and oversee the safety of the over 3.3 million miles of both liquid and gas pipelines in PHMSA’s jurisdiction. In fact, States inspect and enforce pipeline safety regulations for over 85 percent of the infrastructure under PHMSA’s safety authority.

Pipelines continue to be the safest and most efficient mode of transport for the energy American families and our economy depend on.

Reliable, affordable natural gas makes up almost half of our country’s resource mix for power generation, and more than half of American families rely on natural gas to heat their homes, cook their food, and power their lives. Pipeline infrastructure in this country is essential to ensure the safe delivery of energy to fuel our country.

To advance PHMSA’s mission to oversee the safety of our pipeline infrastructure, we will review the discussion draft before us today.

The draft legislation before us focuses on safety, exactly as Congress originally intended with PHMSA’s mission. This discussion draft reauthorizes PHMSA for 5 years, enabling PHMSA to continue modernizing and enhancing its pipeline safety program.

The draft would codify several important provisions to improve the efficiency and safety of the agency.



For example, the bill would:

- Remove duplicative regulations that do not improve safety,
- Clarify that PHMSA’s cost-benefit analysis focuses on safety and not anti-energy agendas,
- Reduce red tape so special permit programs can efficiently focus on pertinent safety requirements,
- Strengthen penalties for pipeline safety violations that impair pipeline operations,
- Establish a voluntary information sharing program to advance good safety practices among pipeline operators, and
- Ensure state damage prevention programs adopt best practices to reduce the leading cause of pipeline damage incidents.

The United States’ energy system is at a turning point. We’re witnessing unprecedented energy demand not seen in decades, and demand is only expected to increase over the next several years.

Safe, efficient development and oversight of our gas and liquid pipeline system is key to providing reliable energy and power to American families.

For too long, sound pipeline safety policy has been hijacked by the environmental left, intent on stymying pipeline expansion and limiting its massive benefits to the nation.

I look forward to working with PHMSA, pipeline operators, and relevant stakeholders to make sure the pipeline safety program is efficient, predictable and focused on safety priorities that promote confidence and enable the safe expansion of our pipeline system.

I hope to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to advance legislation that provides for durable and focused safety oversight appropriate to pipeline infrastructure.

Again, thank you for being here and testifying Administrator Roberti. With that, I yield back.

Ranking Member Kathy Castor (D-FL): Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to Administrator Roberti. Colleagues, pipeline safety should be a bipartisan priority for this committee. It should be easy to agree that pipeline safety requires adequate resources, a robust professional workforce, and a regulator willing to do its job to keep Americans safe.

Congress has proven that we can deliver on those goals, and we've done it in a bipartisan way. We passed the PIPES Act of 2020 to address methane pollution and improve safety standards for gas gathering lines and other pipeline segments. We followed that in 2021 with the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which allocated \$1 billion over five years for grants to help replace leak-prone gas pipelines. Today's hearing should be about building on those successes.



Unfortunately, as with so many bills our Republican colleagues have decided to bring through this committee, you are just not living up to your responsibility to our hard-working neighbors back home. Based on the work product from the Republican side of the aisle, it appears that you are not serious about pipeline safety. You've allowed PHMSA's Office of Pipeline Safety authorization to lapse for over two and a half years. Meanwhile, the Senate Commerce Committee passed a bipartisan PHMSA reauthorization bill.

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee also passed a bipartisan bill. But unfortunately, the Energy and Commerce Republicans have decided to write a bill without Democratic input, which only reflects the priorities of oil and gas polluters. This is not how we craft serious, durable policy. Colleagues, PHMSA needs reform, including new authorities to regulate emerging technologies like hydrogen and carbon dioxide pipelines.

These are industries that Republicans claim to support, yet the bill is silent. It doesn't authorize any studies or rulemakings that would help make these industries safer. PHMSA also needs resources, but this bill authorizes nearly \$200 million per year less than the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee bill. PHMSA needs staff, which is why the House bill authorizes an increase in the number of employees with certain subject-matter expertise.

The Energy and Commerce Committee bill does nothing for workforce development. It is also silent while the Trump Administration reduced the number of employees at PHMSA by 14 percent. Nearly all of PHMSA's senior career staff chose to leave rather than endorse the administration's actions. PHMSA also needs congressional oversight, particularly now.

Pipeline safety enforcement was cut in half in 2025. PHMSA should hold dangerous actors accountable by increasing maximum penalties for breaking the law, but this bill does nothing to strengthen enforcement. Just last week, the president stood before Congress and claimed that he has rapidly ended high energy prices. That is not true, and our hard-working neighbors back home know this very well.

Electricity prices are up 13% on average, and much higher in many places. The average U.S. household paid \$116 more on their electricity bills last year compared to the year before. Many are paying far more. Since Trump took office, utilities have proposed rate hikes totaling at least \$92 billion in additional costs.

This costs hard-working Americans thousands of dollars. Amidst all this pain, the administration is trying to gut energy assistance and disaster relief programs. Based on current trends, the future is very uncertain for the cost of energy. It appears that the average working American and businesses that rely on consistent energy will continue paying more.

All of this continues the affordability squeeze that I know my constituents back home cannot bear. None of it lowers costs, and none of it keeps Americans safe. Once again, the president has shown he has no solutions to the real problems facing hard-working families. If they are looking to the Energy and Commerce Committee, their time is probably better spent elsewhere—but hope springs eternal.



I strongly encourage my Republican colleagues to work with us to develop a real PHMSA reauthorization bill that protects the American people, not just oil and gas interests. Thank you, I yield back my time.

Full Committee Chairman Brett Guthrie (R-KY): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Administrator, for being here. And my good friend from Florida used the term I was about to use: hope springs eternal.

This is a discussion draft, so there are opportunities for us to do this in a bipartisan way. We hope that we can. I would note that there are a couple of provisions that were not included in our discussion draft because there were some concerns from the minority about them, had they been included.

Hopefully, that is a signal that we want to act in good faith and work together, and that we can get to a solution. I would say, look to the Energy and Commerce Committee, hopefully, we can work together to find common ground—but it has to be common ground; it cannot be just one way or the other. We appreciate that, and hope, as I said, springs eternal. We can work together.

We are not marking up next week; the discussion draft is before us, and hopefully it provides the opportunity to come up with a bipartisan solution. I believe that if we can do it, it will be more stable and give people more certainty. We will continue to work in that direction.

FINSA's pipeline safety program promotes the safe delivery of more than two-thirds of our nation's energy products to market through its regulations, oversight, and partnership with state safety programs. As we consider today's pipeline safety discussion draft and the work and priorities of FINSA, we should not lose focus on this critical role of pipelines.

The energy supplied through pipelines is the safest and most affordable form of fuel transport. It is vital for keeping our lights on, heating our homes, and producing many of the products modern society relies upon. Pipeline infrastructure networks include about 2.4 million miles of natural gas lines serving 74 million American homes and businesses. In addition, there are roughly half a million miles of oil and natural gas transmission lines and related storage infrastructure, which serve communities, manufacturers, refiners, and the transportation sector.

The recent winter storm, Fern, clearly demonstrated the benefits of this essential infrastructure. People had the gas they needed to heat their homes during one of the largest cold weather emergencies in years. Natural gas-fired power generation had the supplies needed to produce electricity when demand peaked. This life-saving performance was made possible by the pipeline transmission and storage network, which is designed to deliver the fuels Americans need, when they need them.

We need a regulatory system designed to support the life-saving value of a safe and efficient pipeline infrastructure. We also need to expand capacity to extend the benefits of energy. More capacity means lower prices.



The discussion of the draft today provides a great opportunity to meet what should be a bipartisan goal: expanding the safe delivery of affordable, reliable energy. I look forward to working with my colleagues to provide the tools and guidance this administration needs to get it done right. Thank you, and I yield back.

Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone (D-NJ): Thank you, Chairman Latta. We are here today to discuss a Republican proposal to reauthorize the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration’s pipeline safety activities, more than two years after the last authorization – the PIPES Act of 2020 – expired. It’s disappointing to me that Republicans are once again choosing to go it alone on this reauthorization because bipartisan cooperation is necessary to get any reauthorization across the finish line. And that’s exactly the approach that both the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Senate Commerce Committee have taken – working together and producing bipartisan bills.

It’s also troubling that Republicans are choosing a partisan path when you look at how the Trump Administration has weakened and radically altered PHMSA’s pipeline safety program over the last year. Enforcement activities have fallen off a cliff – the number of pipeline enforcement cases opened last year was roughly half of the average during the prior four years. Instead of focusing on safety, in the first weeks of the Trump Administration, PHMSA withdrew two ready-to-be-finalized safety rules required by law. It has yet to reissue them.

PHMSA staffing is also a major issue, with a 14 percent reduction and nearly all of its senior career staff choosing to leave. So even if the Administration were to suddenly recognize the importance of keeping our pipelines safe, it’s unclear to me if PHMSA has the resources and staff necessary to aggressively enforce our nation’s pipeline safety laws.

Administrator Roberti, I was frankly hopeful that, with your confirmation, the bleeding and disorder at PHMSA would stop. Unfortunately, that has not been the case.

In recent months, PHMSA has been engaged in a bogus “audit” of grants given to the Pipeline Safety Trust, the nation’s only nonprofit dedicated to pipeline safety. For months, PHMSA suspended reimbursements to the Pipeline Safety Trust, and now is only allowing the resumption of the grant on the condition that it not be used to compensate the Trust’s Executive Director – who testified before this Committee last year on pipeline safety. To me, this looks a lot like retaliation against the only organization working to shine a light on the Trump Administration’s dangerous PHMSA agenda. It is unacceptable and cannot happen again.

You also recently issued a memo indicating that PHMSA would waive enforcing pipeline safety rules for pipelines helping Trump’s so-called energy-dominance agenda. Administrator Roberti, PHMSA does not have the authority to selectively enforce our nation’s laws based on whether the President thinks a pipeline is important or not.

Let me now turn to the discussion draft before us today. This draft represents a marked improvement over the version that Committee Republicans proposed last Congress – it no longer



contains a number of provisions that Democrats had identified as poison pills and were completely unrelated to pipeline safety. However, any pipeline safety reauthorization must strengthen PHMSA's core safety and enforcement responsibilities, especially in light of an Administration that seems unwilling to do so. On that count, this Republican bill falls short.

The bill fails to reauthorize a few provisions from the PIPES Act, including TAG grants and damage prevention programs that are vital to communities. It also fails to formally authorize a continuation of the successful Bipartisan Infrastructure Law program to replace aging, unsafe distribution pipelines across the nation. The draft bill attempts to roll back a requirement from the 2020 law that PHMSA consider environmental harms and does nothing to push PHMSA to finalize safety rules for carbon dioxide pipelines and methane leak detection. Finally, the bill does nothing to enhance PHMSA's ability to fight back against companies flouting its safety rules and regulations.

That is not to say the bill is all bad. I support the establishment of a voluntary information-sharing system and also think that pushing states to adopt best practices for their one-call excavation programs is a good idea. But, the bad in this discussion draft outweighs the good. Committee Republicans should learn the lessons of the partisan approach they took last Congress and not repeat the same mistakes. There is ample time to negotiate and alter the bill before a markup, and I hope we can get to a bipartisan product just like the other two committees have done. If we can't, we risk further delaying reauthorization of PHMSA's critical pipeline safety authorities.

I don't think that's acceptable, and I don't believe Republicans do, either. So, Chairman Latta, let's work in a bipartisan fashion so we can produce a bill that keeps the American people safe.

Thank you. I yield back the balance of my time, Mr. Chairman.

Witnesses

The Honorable Paul Roberti, Administrator, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA)

[*Testimony*](#)

Legislation

H.R. _____, Pipeline Safety Authorization Act of 2026

Q&A

Chairman Bob Latta (R-OH) began by asking whether increased pipeline infrastructure will help drive down energy costs. Mr. Roberti answered that it absolutely would, emphasizing the importance of this infrastructure. Chairman Latta then asked Mr. Roberti to talk about his priorities as Administrator. Mr. Roberti said that it is to be an effective, streamlined, and respected regulator, to ensure that the regulations are modernized, clear, up to date, and that they reflect the engineering and technologies of today. He added that the industry needs to be accountable for running their operations safely, and that he is highly committed to that.



Chairman Latta asked Mr. Roberti what needs to be done to ensure clarity. Mr. Roberti said that when writing these regulations, his team is looking to ensure that there is full transparency. He added that the industry needs to know where PHMSA is targeting their enforcement, so they know what areas of their operations are most important to prioritize. Chairman Latta asked Mr. Roberti how he is prioritizing enforcement to ensure that the most significant safety concerns are always addressed. Mr. Roberti said that historically, PHMSA inspectors would go out and cite everything and anything. He said now, they are focusing on high consequences areas which see the greatest impacts to safety and the environment.

Ranking Member Kathy Castor (D-FL) began by talking about how PHMSA oversees 3.3 million miles of pipeline across the country, meaning the agency has a significant amount of responsibility. Ranking Member Castor asked Mr. Roberti to confirm that safety is his top priority. Mr. Roberti confirmed this. She then expressed concern about the workforce cuts within PHMSA, questioning whether the agency has the ability to keep people safe. Mr. Roberti said that while they have lost staff, no critical safety workers have been affected by these cuts, and that they have been working with the budget they have. Ranking Member Castor then talked about how \$1 billion of grant funding for pipeline improvements was included in the IJA. She asked Mr. Roberti whether they should continue to fund these grants. Mr. Roberti talked about how the grants were inequitable because some states have been privately funding pipeline improvements, meaning they were not getting the same treatment as other states. He said the grants essentially bail out states that failed to make improvements. He said that he will, however, follow through with anything that Congress directs him to do.

Full Committee Chair Brett Guthrie (R-KY) asked how he sees his safety priorities enabling the safe expansion of pipelines and not unnecessarily limiting their benefits. Mr. Roberti said they are not a permitting agency; decisions about whether a pipe gets permitted are in the hands of others. He continued that to the extent the pipelines exist they will make sure the rules for the design and construction are clear and enforced, that they are operated safely, and to not let the agency get distracted beyond their core duties. Chair Guthrie asked if he knows of any proposals that distract the agency from their core duties. Mr. Roberti said a big difference between the last administration and the current administration is not trying to change the agency into becoming an environmental regulator, rather than ensuring that the materials stay in the pipes. He continued those efforts diluted and distracted the agency from their core mission of safety. Chair Guthrie asked how published enforcement procedures and related data help deter unsafe operations. Mr. Roberti said they hope by telling operators where they are going to be focusing they will be more diligent and offer more resources for leak detection, integrity management, excavation damage protection, and avoiding incidents and accidents. Chair Guthrie asked for his thoughts on state damage prevention programs and if this provision will help lower the number of incidents. Mr. Roberti said when you look at the incidents in 2025, 80% of those lie within the jurisdiction of their state partners where they do not have primary jurisdiction. The answer was cut off due to expired time.



Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone (D-NJ) expressed his concern in the reduction in pipeline safety enforcement activity, noting they opened half as many cases last year then it did on average during the Biden administration, and have only opened 10 this year. Ranking Member Pallone asked why enforcement declined last year, and if their enforcement activity will rebound to typical levels this year. Mr. Roberti said many of the numbers were before he came on as administrator. He continued that if you ask anyone within the agency, they will relay that he is focused on compliance, enforcement, and accountability. He continued that in the last few months you have seen the highest administrative penalty of \$9 million for an operator who spilled oil in the Gulf of Mexico. He added that he expects this to continue. Ranking Member Pallone asked for his commitment that enforcement will rebound to typical levels. Mr. Roberti said yes, he expects it to rebound, and noted that for 2025 it was the highest number of fines in the history of the agency. Ranking Member Pallone asked why Americans should have trust in the safety of pipelines in they are announcing that pipelines that benefit the president won't be held to the same standard. Mr. Roberti said that effort can only happen with a demonstration that safety won't be undermined. He continued that they would look at the circumstances in which the operator has stated there is an emergency. He added that we are talking about a situation where there is an emergency that a community might not be able to heat their homes without the pipeline movement and if they find a concern about safety, they will revoke the permit. Ranking Member Pallone asked if PHMSA has done an analysis of the financial benefit the pipeline operators will gain from this wavier. Mr. Roberti doesn't expect them to be used unless there is a serious need to assist communities in deprivation of energy supply. Ranking Member Pallone continued that he is still wary that this enforcement wavier jeopardizes safety and pads the pockets of pipeline companies.

Rep. Gary Palmer (R-AL) discussed that the United States initiated its departure from the United Nation's climate change framework and asked if this reduces spending on enforcement that can be used on other priorities. Mr. Roberti said yes. Rep. Palmer asked if it means you are negating responsibility for taking care of the environment and safety and Mr. Roberti said no. Rep. Palmer asked how important private investment is for improving the nation's network of pipelines. Mr. Roberti responded that the network of pipelines is largely funded by private capital. Rep. Palmer stated that there is a need for additional pipelines and asked if the Keystone XL reversal signaled to the private market that another project could be cancelled for political reasons. Mr. Roberti responded that each presidential permit can be rescinded, while noting it is not good policy. Rep. Palmer expressed concern about the impact of this on the private market. He asked if PHMSA coordinates with other agencies to ensure pipeline cybersecurity. Mr. Roberti responded that they have an MOU with DHS and TSA and work closely with FERC, DOE, and the FBI. Rep. Palmer asked if there are jurisdictional conflicts at the federal or state levels. Mr. Roberti responded that the jurisdiction lies within CISA and TSA. Rep. Palmer stated that PHMSA has been mandated by Congress to complete the Idle Pipeline Rulemaking process and emphasized the importance of regulatory certainty. He noted that the NPRM is projected for



February 2027 and asked for an update on implementation. Mr. Roberti responded that teams are working on this and are hoping to advance this to an NPRM by fall. Rep. Palmer emphasized the importance of this.

Rep. Scott Peters (D-CA) emphasized the importance of ensuring infrastructure is safe and appropriately regulated for safety and competitiveness. He noted the regulatory pendulum can pose challenges, citing standards for pipeline leakage and safety standards as set by the PIPES Act. He discussed his bipartisan bill that would codify PHMSA's draft rule and modernize these standards for gas pipeline leak detection and repair that would provide regulatory certainty. He noted issues with methane emissions. He asked if PHMSA intends to release and finalize an updated leak detection and repair rule. Mr. Roberti responded yes. Rep. Peters asked for a timeline. Mr. Roberti said it is likely not this year, but it is something they want to address. Rep. Peters discussed that the bill would disallow the administration from considering environmental benefits when issuing pipeline safety standards and asked what environmental benefits PHMSA currently considers and balances. Mr. Roberti responded that there needs to be a proper nexus to environment and safety to execute the agency's mission. He emphasized the importance of containment and implementation must be sensitive to cost-effectiveness and leaks in critical areas or for liquid pipelines. He noted there is a tenuous link to climate change in this administration.

Rep. Rick Allen (R-GA) spoke to the critical nature of pipeline security. He asked Mr. Roberti to describe the important role of a cost benefit considering current regulations. Mr. Roberti emphasized that a cost-benefit analysis is fundamental for good governance and regulations and allows for an effective balance between costs and benefits. Rep. Allen asked Mr. Roberti if he agrees that good policy should deemphasize non-U.S. benefits given they can result in extra costs without benefitting taxpayers. Mr. Roberti replied that he does not agree. Sen. Allen asked Mr. Roberti how the discussion draft of the Special Permit Program modernizes the permit process so that pipelines and infrastructure projects can be expanded while maintaining safety and a beneficial process. Mr. Roberti spoke to the Biden administration's requirement of a NEPA analysis for permitting and criticized that requirement for slowing down the Special Permit Program.

Rep. Rob Menendez (D-NJ) began by discussing the 2022 CO2 pipeline incident in Mississippi. He asked Mr. Roberti if in his testimony, he said that safety drives everything PHMSA's Pipeline Safety Program does. He also asked Mr. Roberti if he said that key elements of PHMSA's Pipeline Safety Program include updating and developing regulations and enforcement to hold pipeline operators accountable. Mr. Roberti answered yes to both questions. Rep. Menendez noted that in January 2025, PHMSA issued a notice of proposed rulemaking for CO2 pipelines in response to the 2022 CO2 Mississippi accident. He continued that this rule would require emergency responders to be trained on hazards specific to CO2, expand PHMSA's jurisdiction to cover more pipelines carrying CO2, and address other safety issues that came out



of the Mississippi accident. He asked Mr. Roberti if PHMSA withdrew that proposed rule. Mr. Roberti responded that the “rule” Rep. Menendez is referring to was never officially a rule as it never went to the federal register. He noted however, that the proposed rule is still being considered since it is a mandate of Congress on the gaseous CO2 rules. Rep. Menendez asked Mr. Roberti to explain PHMSA’s plans to make the proposed rule a reality. Mr. Roberti answered that he has instructed his staff to complete the mandate. Rep. Menendez asked Mr. Roberti if he said that enforcement and holding pipeline operators accountable are key elements to PHMSA’s mission. Mr. Roberti replied yes. Rep. Menendez highlighted that the Trump administration has decreased pipeline enforcement in 2025, bringing it to half the average number of cases as the previous year. He noted that PHMSA also announced it would cease enforcement against any pipeline operators who claimed they had to violate safety standards to accommodate the president’s declared energy emergency. He said that both of those instances give an opportunity for pipeline operators to circumvent safety regulations. He added that in addition to a decrease in pipeline enforcement, there has been a decrease in the workforce of pipeline operators, which he said is concerning given the president’s call for more pipelines.

Rep. Troy Balderson (R-OH) asked Mr. Roberti to finish his discussion on the CO2 incident. Mr. Roberti said the incident was very serious, they deployed investigators, and it resulted in a \$2.8 million fine because of the failure of the operator to comply with part 195 of PHMSA code which covered liquid CO2 pipelines. Rep. Balderson noted the legislation they were discussing included language clarifying that end plant piping systems are regulated by OSHA rather than OSHA and PHMSA. He highlighted proposed rulemaking from PHMSA to exempt end plant piping systems. He asked Mr. Roberti to discuss how the duplicative regulation of OSHA and PHMSA made it more challenging for operators to maintain safe operations. Mr. Roberti said ambiguity over jurisdiction was not beneficial, and clarity on oversight allowed for better operations. Rep. Balderson emphasized that the proposed rulemaking noted that OSHA’s regulatory program provided an equivalent level of safety to PHMSA and asked Mr. Roberti if he agreed with that statement. Mr. Roberti did and said he had had high level meetings with OSHA about their regulatory methods. Rep. Balderson asked Mr. Roberti for an update on where the rule making stood and when PHMSA may issue a final rule. Mr. Roberti said it was moving through but he would get him the precise information. Rep. Balderson discussed the advanced notice of proposed rulemaking to modernize federal standards for LNG facilities and asked Mr. Roberti if he believed there was room for PHMSA to better coordinate with FERC and the United States Coast Guard to prevent conflicting or unnecessary regulatory requirements. Mr. Roberti said he did, and it made no sense for PHMSA to inspect an LNG facility at the same time as a FERC inspection. Rep. Balderson asked Mr. Roberti if this was an issue that the National Center for Excellence in LNG Safety would focus on in the future. Mr. Roberti said the center would focus on knowledge management and best practices and working closely with FERC.

Rep. Jennifer McClellan (D-VA) spoke about the importance of PHMSA’s oversight of pipelines throughout the country and expressed disappointment in the current draft legislation,



noting there was bipartisan legislation in both the House and the Senate geared at maintaining strong oversight and funding to update aging pipeline infrastructure. She said the draft legislation included provisions to strip requirements of PHMSA to consider environmental impacts and safety standards. She asked Mr. Roberti if he believed that community engagement support and transparency were important to the long-term success of a pipeline project. Mr. Roberti said that community liaisons did a good job when an incident occurred and that it was important. Rep. McClellan reiterated this importance, noted that the administration was cutting enforcement activity and the bill would further cut PHMSA's ability to consider environmental impacts in issuing safety standards. She said she could not see how under these conditions any pipeline project would garner public support and trust in the impacted communities, adding that historically disadvantaged communities would continue to suffer the consequences. She asserted that those communities should not receive less oversight due to a lack of political access or resources. Rep. McClellan asked Mr. Roberti if PHMSA tracked inspections, incidents and enforcement outcomes in a manner that allows them to display with evidence that safety was being applied consistently across communities, including those historically overburdened by such projects. Mr. Roberti said he had observed their website was not user friendly and did not demonstrate the level of work they were doing to monitor pipeline remediation, which was a high priority. Rep. McClellan highlighted community concerns about pipeline safety.

Rep. Diana Harshbarger (R-TN) began by talking about how there were 147,000 instances of damage to pipeline infrastructure in 2024. She asked Mr. Roberti what steps PHMSA is taking to strengthen 811 compliance requirements nationwide. Mr. Roberti said excavation damage is a heightened concern and that they rely on state partners for excavation prevention programs. He said that a lot of the jurisdiction still relies on states, but PHMSA tries to leverage the grant program to encourage better safety. Mr. Roberti said that it is time to bolster a national standard and increase training and supervision. Rep. Harshbarger then talked about how half of PHMSA's technical assistance grant funding went to an organization which had significant deficiencies in their financial practices. She asked how he will ensure stronger financial oversight in grant fundings in the future. Mr. Roberti said that Congress chose to give that funding to this organization, and he and his team found that it was clear as day that this organization had engaged in lobbying and advocacy against PHMSA.

Rep. Diana DeGette (D-CO) began by asking whether it is true that PHMSA published a rule that limits the types of conditions that can be included in special permits in September 2025. Mr. Roberti said he was not aware of that. Rep. DeGette said that the draft bill that they are considering today would codify this rule. She said that in the notice of proposed rulemaking, it specifically cites criticism from the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America (INGAA) about PHMSA's practice of adopting numerous conditions and special permits. Rep. DeGette asked Mr. Roberti if this was correct. Mr. Roberti said that there was a practice to add all sorts of extraneous, superfluous conditions that were intended to prevent innovation. Rep. DeGette asked whether any of his colleagues had previously worked at INGAA. Mr. Roberti answered that



Deputy Administrator Kochman had worked there. Rep. DeGette asked whether there was a conflict of interest here. Mr. Roberti said that he views it differently given that they have all previously worked at PHMSA and all went and got other jobs in the meantime. He added that the industry experience is important and said that anyone who works for him at the agency adheres to the highest ethical standards. Rep. DeGette asked whether when somebody leaves the agency, there should be a bifurcation between the interest that they're now representing in their current position and the previous position they held at the agency. Mr. Roberti said that there should be but added that you wouldn't get away with doing anything unethical in the government. Rep. DeGette said that she was dismayed that Deputy Administrator Kochman recently published an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking to get feedback on how to cut back repair requirements in which he cited comments from INGAA that he himself had authored while Director of Pipeline Safety Policy. She said that this makes it look like he is open to constructive feedback but won't do anything differently than what was originally intended. Rep. DeGette asked Mr. Roberti whether a Deputy Administrator citing his own comments is a conflict of interest. Mr. Roberti said that the body of the document is worked out by career officials. Rep. DeGette concluded by stating that a Deputy Administrator should not be able to base their decisions on the comments they made themselves.

Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA) discussed Iowa's large reliance on a vast network of pipelines, and although no one was injured, incidents like the one most recently in Washington state can shake the trust a community has in such pipelines. Rep. Miller-Meeks asked what role he sees PHMSA playing in keeping the public informed after an incident regarding the cause, the fixes, and any longer-term safety changes. Mr. Roberti said he is aware of that incident, and they deployed their investigators monitoring the remediation activities. He added that they have community liaisons that can assist the staff, as well as his staff being available to help. Rep. Miller-Meeks asked how new tools and innovation are being encouraged in regulation, in order to reward innovation and not punish it. Mr. Roberti said the movement of technology is critical, and they have an R&D form coming up to help push new technologies. Rep. Miller-Meeks asked if any federal agency require electric transmission companies to notify pipeline operators of before conducting a reconductoring or voltage upgrade project in a shared right away, and if not should PHMSA work with FERC and DOE to create a clear, coordination process. Mr. Roberti said that it is an emerging issue and has recently met with a few trade associations who are worried about this. He added that there was a failure recently due to current in a transmission line causing corrosion and said more needs to be done in coordination with other federal agencies.

Rep. Doris Matsui (D-CA) discussed her concerns towards the recent actions taken by PHMSA that undermine pipeline safety. She continued that PHMSA is trying to overrule state authorities in California and authorize the Sable Offshore pipeline that caused a 120,000-gallon oil spill in 2015. Rep. Matsui asked if he is familiar with this pipeline and its history. Mr. Roberti said he is very familiar with that pipeline. Rep. Matsui asked if he is familiar with the cause of the oil spill. Mr. Roberti said he is familiar with it and was involved in enforcement action at the federal level



and with the state of California. He added that under his leadership led to the highest fine in the history of the United States for the spill of oil. Rep. Matsui noted that as a result of legal action the state of California needed to approve the restarting of the pipeline, after getting rejected Sable petitioned PHMSA to take over. In taking over, they executed an emergency permit within 6 days. Rep. Matsui asked if a environmental review was conducted. Mr. Roberti said an environmental review is underway as part of the decision. Rep. Matsui asked if a public notice and comment period was issued as required by law. Mr. Roberti said it has been resubmitted and believes a public comment period is open right now. Rep. Matsui noted that Sable is currently facing multiple criminal complaints regarding environmental violations in relation to work done on this pipeline. Rep. Matsui asked that within six days with no environmental review and no public comment period they determined that all safety issues had been addressed. Mr. Roberti said they deployed a team of investigators and did it collaboratively with the state and conducted a 12-page report. Rep. Matsui asked if companies can self-certify how does PHMSA plans to conduct oversight. Mr. Roberti said the first step is to send investigators out there, and they made it clear there have been serious efforts to make sure the pipeline is up to code.

Rep. Russell Fry (R-SC) emphasized the importance of pipelines and PHMSA. He noted that there should not be additional congressional mandates and should give the administration space to advance priorities and safety. He asked Mr. Roberti to discuss his backlog of rulemaking. Mr. Roberti responded that they achieved compliance with the class location rule and are moving the LNG facilities rule, with an NPRM expected to be released in the first half of this year. He discussed the idle pipeline rule, as well. He noted that they have prioritized by the greatest impact on safety, but noted there are additional outstanding mandates. Rep. Fry discussed protests that have damaged pipelines and the prosecutorial issue when this damage is not necessarily physical. He asked Mr. Roberti his thoughts on addressing this loophole. Mr. Roberti responded that he is supportive of protests but noted that tampering with a pipeline can create extreme danger and supply disruption. He noted that the time has come to address this conduct. Rep. Fry stated that the measure covers damage to sites under construction and asked if it is an appropriate deterrent. Mr. Roberti responded that it is necessary to be vigilant on both the physical and cybersecurity side.

Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY) discussed the role of PHMSA in funding R&D and expressed concern about 9 grants that were terminated dealing with safety and corrosion issues for CO2 and hydrogen pipelines. He asked Mr. Roberti if they currently exist in the US. Mr. Roberti responded that there are 5,600 miles of CO2 pipelines and much lower hydrogen pipelines. Rep. Tonko asked if these will grow over the coming years. Mr. Roberti responded that this depends on the clean energy transition but noted the code is sufficient in regulating them. Rep. Tonko responded that many believe there will be more pipelines in the future and asked if there should be more information. Mr. Roberti responded that they want R&D to bring information to market to inform safety and noted that some of these grants did not seem an appropriate area to experiment with taxpayer money. Rep. Tonko asked why these are not being prioritized by the



administration. Mr. Roberti responded that they are focusing R&D on corrosion detection and inhibiting corrosion on pipelines, which are threats that risk rupture to a pipeline. Rep. Tonko noted a statement from a PHMSA spokesperson talking about wasting resources on the Green New Deal agenda. He stated PHMSA research should focus on emerging issues that promote pipeline safety.

Rep. Gabe Evans (R-CO) asked Mr. Roberti how burdensome environmental regulations and climate mandates in democratic states prevent the safe and consistent maintenance of pipeline infrastructure. Mr. Roberti answered that these environmental regulations and mandates are leading state legislators to believe they don't need pipelines and natural gas, which is incorrect. He emphasized that the electric grid cannot accommodate the mega-watt hours that would be necessary to convert high-density sources of energy. Rep. Evans asked Mr. Roberti if it is safe to say that when regulators and regulatory burdens target pipelines, they can't invest the time, resources, and technology to make distribution systems safer since they are dealing with a regulatory structure that does not see pipelines as necessary. Mr. Roberti answered yes. Rep. Evans asked Mr. Roberti to discuss how information sharing systems of the Pipeline Safety bill enhance public safety. Mr. Roberti responded that he thinks it will facilitate information sharing, possibly through leveraging AI, and ultimately making pipelines safer.

Rep. Kim Schrier (D-WA) referred to an instance in the state of Washington where a blueberry farmer stumbled upon a BP pipeline oil spill and expressed her concern that BP was not aware of the leak. She asked Mr. Roberti to comment on why the public seems to appear more able to detect oil spills than pipeline operators. Mr. Roberti answered that he shares Rep. Schrier's concerns and said that the BP pipeline leak is under investigation. Rep. Schrier noted that PHMSA has refrained from setting performance standards for leak detection systems. She asked if PHMSA needs clear statutory direction to set a quantitative performance standard on leak detection systems. Mr. Roberti replied that he does believe PHMSA needs to set a standard but did emphasize the importance of leak detection systems.

Rep. August Pfluger (R-TX) noted there was still plenty of time to make the legislation bipartisan and it should be as pipelines were the safest delivery method in the world, noting the vast pipelines in Texas. He emphasized that national security depended on the network and discussed ERCOT's reliance on natural gas fire generation and the importance of an adequate pipeline infrastructure and timely development for affordability. He asked Mr. Roberti to discuss how the PHMSA reauthorization will ensure that pipeline infrastructure could be developed safely and efficiently to improve reliability and affordability. Mr. Roberti said there was value in growing the nations pipelines for their safety, and they stood ready to review and assist in ensuring design and operation of pipelines would be safe through clear and understandable regulations. Rep. Pfluger said predictability in regulations was important for operators' ability to meet them. He spoke about advanced oil recovery's reliance on CO2 and asked Mr. Roberti if PHMSA would specifically modernize the regulations for CO2 to ensure they were workable for



operators and safe. Mr. Roberti said yes and highlighted the focus on consensus with industry standards and emphasizing cost/benefit. Rep. Pfluger asked how a reauthorization would strengthen coordination between state agencies. Mr. Roberti explained that grant money for state-based grants created a partnerships with states as well as serving as an accountability tool. Rep. Pfluger asked Mr. Roberti if the agency intended to revisit how gas gathering lines were classified, specifically for inspection and compliance. Mr. Roberti said the current law gave the secretary discretion and agreed to submit the rest of the answer in writing.

Rep. Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX) spoke about the energy capital of the world in Houston in her district, and their knowledge of pipeline safety. She said the safety of communities had to remain a priority as the demand for energy grew and that safety depended on the relationship between industry and regulators at PHMSA. She noted that the cuts and deregulation made by the administration meant PHMSA was struggling to fulfill its statutory obligations. Rep. Fletcher expressed concern about PHMSA senior leadership leaving and pause of rulemaking resulting in PHMSA being unprepared to meet the challenges of the growing energy needs, and the draft legislation also failed to address the issues by cutting funding and providing a path forward for new technologies. She said they needed PHMSA to be forward thinking, highlighted a technology pilot provision she had included in the prior reauthorization and expressed disappointment the draft legislation did not reauthorize the program. She asked Mr. Roberti what they could do to ensure the success and reauthorization of the program. Mr. Roberti said there was alignment with the program and work on special permits, and the program was bogged down because of the influence of extraneous aspects like NEPA review, but they were trying to be open to innovative techniques.

Rep. Julie Fedorchak (R-ND) began by thanking the Administrator for his passion on the issue of pipeline safety. Rep. Fedorchak asked Mr. Roberti to talk about this cooperative federalism model, state partnerships, and whether they have enough money for this at PHMSA. Mr. Roberti said that state partners cover 80% of the natural gas distribution pipelines and emphasized the importance of this model. He said that they work hard to train them and have an annual certification program. Mr. Roberti said that if Congress could provide more money, they would certainly invest it in the states, but the budget isn't high enough to invest more now. Rep. Fedorchak said that she is happy to advocate for increased dollars towards that. She asked Mr. Roberti to talk more about enforcement and accountability. Mr. Roberti said that every time an accident or incident happens, it is incumbent on PHMSA to be there to fully evaluate, report, and investigate the incident. He said that every time an accident happens, they will look at what should have been done under the code.

Rep. Jake Auchincloss (D-MA) talked about PHMSA's relatively small R&D budget of \$12 million. Rep. Auchincloss asked Mr. Roberti what could be done on the R&D and tech deployment around methane leak detection. Mr. Roberti said leak detection is critical, whether it is methane or jet fuel. He said that their upcoming R&D forum is a good opportunity to find out



what new technologies are available and whether there are lower cost ways to monitor methane in high consequence areas. Rep. Auchincloss said that PHMSA should learn from the successes and failures of other agencies and issue clear criteria which will create a market for innovators to sell into. He said that the people who can develop these technologies are out there, it's just about finding the best ways to attract them. He added he has some concerns over taking hundreds of millions of dollars and just putting it out there, as that may not be the most cost effective

Rep. Kevin Mullin (D-CA) discussed a natural gas pipeline explosion that occurred 15 years ago in his district, that claimed 8 lives and damaging over 100 homes. He stated that it important we get this reauthorization right and rather discussing the bipartisan bill out of the T&I committee they are discussing this partisan bill that cuts \$150 million from funding to replace dangerous and outdated gas distribution pipelines and won't be able to sustain the grant program to replace damaged and aging infrastructure. Rep, Mullin asked by the time this grant runs out of funding will every dangerous and outdated pipeline have been replaced. Mr. Roberti said the age of pipeline doesn't make it unsafe, but when you are looking at systems that could predate more than a hundred years ago you need to have a longer-term sustained approach in replacement, and whatever congress decides they will implement the program effectively but operators need to know where the risks are and act accordingly.

Rep. Marc Veasey (D-TX) asked if he would agree that public trust relies on both industry performance and effective oversight. Mr. Roberti said yes. Rep. Veasey asked what would happen if funding does not keep pace with new pipeline deployment. Mr. Roberti said as an agency they work hard to reorient and making sure they are efficient and effective in how they run the agency, making sure the code is updated and clear, and that there is accountability in the industry. He added those efforts will lead the industry and keep it operating and making sure they are investing properly and using the most up to date technology. Rep. Veasey asked where the current pipeline policies fall short. Mr. Roberti said the majority of the incidents are with states having primary jurisdiction and the leading cause being excavation related. He noted an incident that happened earlier today due to drilling hitting a pipeline. Rep. Veasey asked if PHMSA does not have sufficient resources or authority on what specific safety activities need to be dropped or minimized. Mr. Roberti said their enforcement/inspection division were exempted from any reduction or early retirement.

Rep. John Joyce (R-PA) emphasized the importance of pipeline safety and capacity. He noted the need for public trust and predictable regulation. He asked what steps can be taken to future-proof regulations to allow for the adoption of technology. Mr. Roberti responded that many efforts have been aimed at ensuring the code reflects modern technologies, discussing the importance of cost-effectiveness, safety, and confidence. Rep. Joyce asked if there is congressional direction that can assist in incentivizing industry innovation. Mr. Roberti responded that it is helpful to maintain the agency's focus on the core mission. Rep. Joyce discussed PHMSA's refocused enforcement on the inspection framework and asked how



refocusing oversight allows for targeted enforcement of safety. Mr. Roberti responded by highlighting certain high consequence areas. Rep. Joyce asked if this is more targeted and Mr. Roberti said yes, noting it is safety driven. Rep. Joyce expressed support for these goals.

Chairman Latta brought the hearing to a close.