

American Energy Innovation Act Floor Statement June 29, 2020
Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) and Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

Senator Murkowski

Madam President, I've come to the floor with my good friend from West Virginia, Senator Manchin, to discuss our American Energy Innovation Act.

We spent more than a year working with the members of our panel, and many other members of this chamber, to put together an overwhelmingly bipartisan package.

Our bill focuses on a range of promising technologies, including energy storage, renewable energy, carbon capture, advanced nuclear, cleaner vehicles, and energy efficiency.

Our bill would improve cyber security. It would help modernize the electric grid. It addresses known weaknesses in our mineral security and supply chains. It would boost workforce development and job creation. And it would renew a range of popular programs, from ARPA-E to Weatherization Assistance. It is a significant bill.

An unrelated dispute stalled our bill earlier this year, but I remain 100 percent committed to advancing our bill into law before the end of the year – and Senator Manchin, I know you agree.

Senator Manchin

Thank you, Senator Murkowski, I wholeheartedly agree.

This bill is the product of over a year of work and a robust process, both in the Energy Committee and also on the Senate floor in early March.

39 of the 53 base bills are bipartisan, and 72 Senators have either sponsored or cosponsored language included in the package.

The American Energy Innovation Act would authorize just over \$24 billion for technologies critical to an all of the above energy policy that keeps our energy affordable and reliable while also reducing emissions.

It truly takes a balanced and forward-leaning approach to updating our national energy policy for the first time in 13 years. This bill is necessary to help us chart the way to a cleaner and more secure energy future.

As you mentioned, our bill was unfortunately derailed back in March by an issue that is entirely outside of the Energy Committee's jurisdiction.

Since then, the world has dramatically changed and our hearts are heavy with the loss of over 128,000 Americans.

What our country has gone through over these last few months reinforces the need for this comprehensive energy bill, as we heard just two weeks ago from experts testifying before the Energy Committee.

I am steadfast in my commitment to getting our American Energy Innovation Act done this year.

Senator Murkowski, would you agree that we may even need this legislation more now than we did four months ago?

Senator Murkowski

Senator Manchin, I was ready to pass our bipartisan package before the pandemic. And I'm even more ready now.

The U.S. economy, our quality of life, and our health all depend on a stable, secure, and innovative energy industry.

Our bill will help ensure we remain a global energy leader while strengthening our security, making timely investments in clean technologies, and rebuilding our supply chains.

It will also help us capture the industries of the future – and all of the jobs and benefits associated with them. It will help improve our cyber security. And it will foster innovation, a bedrock that is responsible for half of the economic growth in the U.S. since World War II.

Senator Manchin, would you agree that our bill can help with the nation's recovery?

Senator Manchin

Our American Energy Innovation Act would absolutely help our economic recovery.

Between March and April, the energy industry lost 1.3 million jobs – that's a 13% drop that essentially wipes out all industry-wide job growth in the last 5 years.

That's on top of the major shifts in U.S. and global energy markets that preceded and intensified in the pandemic with a catastrophic hit to the economy and to workers.

American workers need immediate relief as well as longer term assistance and they need jobs in the sectors of tomorrow's energy economy.

This energy package put billions of dollars into research, development, demonstration, and deployment of energy technologies that will create skilled and high-paying jobs, while also establishing workforce grants to ensure unemployed or new workers have the skills and opportunities to get back to work.

On top of that, our bill would help develop technologies needed in four sectors of the U.S. economy – power generation, transportation, industry, and commercial and residential buildings – that contribute 90% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

While we're expecting a 14% drop in U.S. carbon dioxide emissions from the energy sector in 2020 – the largest drop ever – because our economy was shut down, those emissions will bounce back as our country reopens.

Investing in technologies like carbon capture, energy storage, and energy efficiency are critical for rebuilding our economy, something we desperately need right now, while also reducing emissions.

Senator Murkowski, our bill invests in technologies across the board and across fuel types. Do you agree that keeping this all of the above energy package together is the best path forward?

Senator Murkowski

I do – absolutely.

I have filed two amendments to NDAA – containing the text of our Nuclear Energy Leadership Act and our American Mineral Security Act – to provide a secondary pathway in case we remain blocked on our energy package.

Both of my amendments have a clear nexus to our national defense and make sense on NDAA. Both have substantial bipartisan support. We know there are not many moving vehicles. But there's no question – my strong preference is to enact them as part of our energy package.

Senator Manchin, you've been working with us to advance these measures on the NDAA bill. But, I know you also greatly prefer to pass them as part of our energy bill.

Senator Manchin

We've put together a strong, bipartisan energy package, and our country needs every part of it to get enacted.

Our national energy policy hasn't been updated since 2007, the same year the iPhone was released.

Since then, there have been at least 10 different iPhone models to keep up in a world that is constantly evolving, but we haven't been able to do the same for our energy policies.

Getting this update enacted is long overdue, and I hope that my colleagues agree and will come together to support passing this bill in its entirety, rather than moving it in pieces.

Seventy-two of my fellow Senators have language in this bill that they've either sponsored or cosponsored. Let's move this bill, as is, rather than piecemeal or – even worse – starting from scratch next year.

Senator Murkowski, do you agree?

Senator Murkowski

Completely and fully. It would be a mistake – and a significant one, at that – for Congress to simply give up on energy policy for yet another year.

Congress last enacted a major energy bill in 2007, now more than 12 and a half years ago.

We've since seen an oil and gas renaissance. The cost of renewables has declined sharply. New technologies have begun to emerge. We have new opportunities and challenges to address. What's missing is the U.S. Congress coming together to modernize our nation's energy policies.

It would be a mistake to decide that this is just too hard, and there's just not enough time left. We've been down that road before. We're so far along, but that thinking would reset these efforts back to the start.

Senator Manchin, I know you agree there will be no giving up, at any point, from either one of us.

Senator Manchin

That's right. We have a strong, bipartisan framework in the American Energy Innovation Act that was developed through robust committee process.

It will help the energy sector recover, put people back to work, and advance our emissions reduction goals.

I am committed to continue working with you, as my good friend and the Chairman of the Energy Committee, and all of our fellow Senate colleagues to advance this important and comprehensive bill to update our national energy policy.

I encourage all of my colleagues to join us in recognizing the importance of this legislation and in support of moving it through the Senate so we can get it enacted this year.