

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES

CHAIRMAN RON WYDEN, *D-Oregon*

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Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Wyden Energy & Natural Resources Committee April 23, 2013

- The Committee will come to order. The purpose of today's hearing is to receive testimony on five bills pending before the Committee. Four of the bills on the Committee's agenda promote hydropower. If I had to cut my comments on these bills down to one phrase, that would be, as Senator Murkowski and I have talked about often, "hydro is back."
- The fact that four of the first five energy bills considered by the Committee this year promote hydropower shows how important this resource can be to a clean energy future.
- S. 545, the Hydropower Improvement Act of 2013, has been introduced by the Ranking Committee Member Senator Murkowski. S. 545 includes a number of provisions that will make the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licensing process more efficient and at the same time be extremely sensitive to environmental values. I'm pleased to be a cosponsor of S. 545.
- In the last Congress a hearing was held on similar legislation, S. 629, and the bill was reported by the Committee. I believe S. 545 is a significant improvement from its predecessor and an important step forward toward increasing the contribution of renewable hydropower to the transition of what we call here a lower-carbon economy.
- Also on the agenda is H.R. 267, the Hydropower Regulatory Efficiency Act of 2013, sponsored by Representatives Cathy McMorris Rogers and Diane DeGette. H.R. 267 is very similar to S.

545 and was passed by the House unanimously by a vote of 422-0. When you just say those words, 422-0, you almost feel like the vote took place in an alternative galaxy. It is hard to imagine anything passing 422 to nothing.

- The other hydropower bill on the agenda is S. 306, the Small Conduit and Rural Jobs Act, introduced by Senator Barrasso, a Member of this Committee. S. 306 expands and simplifies the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Reclamation over hydropower on existing pipelines, canals and other small conduits, on Bureau facilities.
- Also before the Committee is H.R. 678, sponsored by Representative Tipton. H.R. 678 is similar to S. 306. It was passed by the House earlier this month by a vote of 416-7 after a compromise was reached on language concerning the application of the National Environmental Protection Act.
- Finally, I am pleased to have before the Committee S. 761, the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act introduced by our colleagues Senators Shaheen and Senator Portman. This bill is very similar to S. 1000 as reported by the Committee in September, 2011, with titles covering building efficiency, commercial building efficiency finance, industrial efficiency, and federal agency energy efficiency.
- The Energy Information Administration reports that the building and industrial sectors of our economy currently account for 72 percent of this country's energy usage. So, improving their efficiency can play a major role in cutting costs for our businesses and our consumers, making our economy more competitive, and reducing greenhouse gas and other emissions.
- I look forward to hearing from the witnesses about these bills and how they will help contribute to a cleaner energy future.