

Floor Statement of Rep. Paul Tonko
Safe Climate Caucus
November 21, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. H.R. 1900 attempts to solve a problem that simply doesn't exist. The bill seeks to change FERC's process even though the pipeline companies have testified that the permitting process is "generally very good." Thousands of miles of natural gas pipelines are being approved under the current system.

We have real energy challenges in this country and should be seeking real solutions to these challenges, not spending our time on problems that don't exist. My amendment addresses a real problem: the dangers of climate change and the contributions of natural gas infrastructure to this growing threat. And it prevents waste by ensuring that we use it and don't lose it.

Climate change is the most urgent energy challenge that we face today. If global average temperature continues to increase, we will face even more serious impacts including flooding of coastal cities; increased risks to our food supply; unprecedented heat waves; exacerbated water scarcity in many regions; increased frequency of high-intensity tropical cyclones, such as Hurricane Sandy and the recent super-typhoon in the Philippines; and irreversible loss of the plants and animals that share this planet with us.

Our behavior is driving these changes. We must take responsibility for this situation and work to halt it. We should not leave this path to our children and grandchildren and condemn them to a more uncertain and unsafe world.

Many hope that natural gas, or methane, will serve as a critical bridge fuel as we work to reduce our carbon pollution. But natural gas poses its own challenges. Although natural gas emits less carbon dioxide when burned than coal or oil, the development and

transportation of natural gas results in releases of methane, which is a potent greenhouse gas – 25 times more damaging to the climate than carbon dioxide.

This is a serious concern. According to a study by the World Resources Institute, leaks from natural gas systems “represent a significant source of global warming pollution in the U.S.” The study further found that methane leaks occur at every stage of the natural gas life cycle – at the well head, from compression facilities, and from pipelines. These fugitive methane emissions can reduce or even negate the net climate benefits of using natural gas as a substitute for coal and oil.

The good news is that we can reduce methane emissions by applying proven, cost-effective technologies throughout the natural gas system. My amendment will ensure that new pipelines incorporate designs, systems, and practices that minimize leaks, thereby conserving gas and reducing pollution.

We will still need to address problems with existing infrastructure and other sources within the natural gas system, but this would be a very important start. It is precisely what we should expect and require of energy infrastructure that will be around for decades.

By including this requirement in the law, the applicants are informed before they begin their application of the requirement for this information, and would have ample time to include it in permit applications. And encouraging the prevention and monitoring of leaks would have the added benefit of increasing pipeline safety.

The language does not require an applicant to wait for the development of something new. These technologies exist today and only need to be applied to the extent applicable. This makes both economic and environmental sense. By reducing pipeline leaks, the

amendment ensures that more of our domestic energy resources will be used and fewer of these resources will be wasted.

The amendment doesn't fix the core problems with H.R. 1900, including the bill's arbitrary and harmful deadlines. But it does ensure that the bill addresses an energy problem that actually exists. If we are going to revisit the laws governing the permitting of natural gas pipelines, this is the kind of commonsense step we should be discussing.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.