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Opening Statement Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member

Hearing on "How Obama's Green Energy Agenda is Killing Jobs"

September 22, 2011

Madam Secretary, it is an honor to have you here. The Administration is fortunate to have your commitment to the environment, to our economy, and to American jobs. I also welcome Deputy Secretary Poneman from the Department of Energy and Dr. Hall from the Department of Labor.

When I go home to my district in Baltimore, my constituents are clear about what they want: they want jobs. They don't care if these jobs are green, purple, or any other color, as long as they pay a fair wage and give them a sense of prosperity and hope for their children's future. My constituents also tell me they are tired of the inflammatory rhetoric coming out of Washington, and I agree. Some Members appear more interested in making wild allegations for political purposes than in finding solutions to the challenges we face.

Let me give you an example. On September 8, the Chairman issued a staff report claiming the Recovery Act was a "failure" because it "destroyed" or "forestalled" one million private sector jobs. To support this extreme conclusion, the report cited only a single study issued in May. That study was quickly discredited for its flawed methodology.

Nobel Laureate Paul Krugman called the underlying study "weak and dubious," and he warned that it was being "seized on by people who have no idea what the issues are."

In contrast, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated in its most recent report that the Recovery Act "[i]ncreased the number of people employed by between 1.0 million and 2.9 million" and "[i]ncreased the number of full-time-equivalent jobs by 1.4 million to 4.0 million." Other mainstream economists agree with CBO.

A second example of this false rhetoric is the title of today's hearing: "How Obama's Green Energy Agenda is Killing Jobs." Despite this rhetoric, there is no evidence that the Administration's clean energy programs are resulting in fewer jobs. In fact, just the opposite is true.

Developing clean energy technologies is critical to our economic survival, and our competitors know this. China is making massive investments in clean energy programs and dominating these sectors. America is losing its edge in the global marketplace, and we will lose the future ownership of these technologies—and the jobs they create—if we fail to support these sectors.

As a third example, the Chairman appeared on national television this week and accused specific Members of Congress of “crony capitalism” for supporting green initiatives in their districts. He called this “corruption” and claimed it was “endemic.” He also said this: “there’s been this attitude that somehow government can weigh in with loan guarantees and money and pick winners—specific company winners and losers.”

But just last year, in 2010, the Chairman wrote personally to the Secretary of Energy seeking a loan guarantee for an electric vehicle company in San Diego. He not only supported one company, but he endorsed the entire concept of green energy. He said this loan would help in “shifting away from fossil fuels and using viable renewable energy sources.” He said the loan would “reduce dependence on foreign oil” ... “enhance energy security” ... and “promote domestic job creation throughout California as well as in other states.”

Mr. Chairman, in terms of this loan program, it seems like you were for it before you were against it. And according to this morning’s press reports, ten other Members on your side wrote similar letters. I have no problem with these letters or your praise for the program. But I disagree with the claim that Members who support green energy programs are somehow corrupt.

My basic point is this. If we are going to compete with China in the decades to come, we need to be responsible and serious in our efforts. We need to do what my constituents and your constituents and the majority of Americans elected us to do. We need to focus on creating jobs, boosting the economy, and serving the interests of American citizens.

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