

Technology to Achieve EPA Power Plant Rule Not Ready

MAR 12, 2014

Washington, D.C. – The Subcommittees on Environment and Energy today held a joint hearing to explore the basis for the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) conclusion that carbon capture and storage (CCS) systems are adequately demonstrated as a technology for controlling carbon dioxide emissions in full-scale commercial power plants under EPA’s New Source Performance Standards (NSPS).

Environment Subcommittee Chairman David Schweikert (R-Ariz.): “My colleagues and I received testimony from a variety of professionals in the energy field on the EPA’s NSPS proposal, which revealed an immature mandate request for utility companies, based on flimsy scientific data, and oversight without legitimate, existing infrastructure for our energy production. These requirements of CCS storage for power plants are so expensive and unavailable, witness David Hawkins, the Director of Climate Programs for the Natural Resources Defense Council admitted they would not be adopted without regulation. Until these technologies are proven to be commercially available for our utilities companies without risks of harm to the storage location of carbon dioxide, our cities’ power suppliers will be left with very little options for compliance and freedom to grow their businesses.”

The Clean Air Act (CAA) established a unique technology-based mechanism for controlling emissions from stationary sources. EPA has the authority to reduce emissions through the CAA only if reductions are achievable through demonstrated technology —after considering non-air environmental impacts and economic costs. In order for new power plants to achieve reductions under EPA’s NSPS, they would need to use CCS technology. That means that EPA had to define CCS technology as “adequately demonstrated,” even though this technology has never been used to scale in a single existing power plant. Technical experts testified today that CCS is not ready for use in either coal or natural gas fired power plants. They also highlighted the significant challenges associated with long-term geologic sequestration of carbon dioxide.

Energy Subcommittee Chairman Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.): “The EPA is ignoring the consequences of their rulemaking to instead set a legal precedent for mandating unproven technologies. This is a policy of picking winners and losers through environmental regulations. New natural gas fired units, boilers and heaters

and existing plant standards are next. We need to see an all-of-the-above energy policy, not one based purely on politics.”

The following witnesses testified today before the Subcommittees:

Panel 1

David Hawkins, Director of Climate Change Programs, Natural Resources Defense Council

Robert G. Hilton, Vice President, Power Technologies for Government Affairs, Alstom Power Inc.

Robert C. Trautz, Senior Technical Leader, Electric Power Research Institute

Scott Miller, General Manager and CEO, City Utilities of Springfield Missouri, American Public Power Association

Panel 2

Janet McCabe, Acting Assistant Administrator, Office of Air and Radiation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency