

June Washington Update

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VIEWPOINT TOPICS

- Sustainable Energy & Infrastructure

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This month's Washington Update offers an extensive overview of the major legislation that has recently been introduced on Capitol Hill, as well as the big takeaways from this month's congressional hearings related to energy policy. We also examine the ramifications of President Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement, and highlight the Department of Energy's latest funding announcements for three research and development projects.

Six months into the 115th Congress, and nearly 150 days into the Trump administration, the debate on Capitol Hill is still largely defined by efforts to "repeal and replace" Obamacare.

The House of Representatives has passed the American Health Care Act (AHCA) leaving it to the Senate to make the next move. Despite a general view that Obamacare "repeal and replace" was likely dead in the Senate, there is a renewed effort to pass a bill. At question is whether Senate GOP leadership can secure enough Republican votes for passage, and whether, if a bill were to pass the Senate, it could be reconciled with the AHCA. Senate Republicans hope to vote on their legislation in June, but that vote could slip into July.

What does this have to do with energy policy?

In short, there is still a long road ahead on the health care debate, and this impacts the timeline for most other legislative initiatives.

With that said, advocates of energy policy are still active on Capitol Hill, and the Trump administration continues to advance its energy agenda at the agency level.

Capitol Hill

Legislation Introduced

Rep. Markwayne Mullin (R-OK) has introduced the *Promoting Cross-Border Energy Infrastructure Act* (H.R. 2883) to "establish a more uniform, transparent, and modern process to authorize the construction, connection, operation, and maintenance of international border-crossing facilities for the import and export of oil and natural gas and the transmission of electricity."

Rep. David Loebsack (D-IA) has introduced the *Renew America's Schools Act* (H.R. 2536), which provides grants for energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy improvements at public school facilities.

Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD) has introduced the *21st Century Power Grid Act* (H.R. 2507) providing for a technology demonstration related to the modernization of the power grid.

Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) has introduced the *Pipeline Fairness and Transparency Act* (S. 1314), which would amend the Natural Gas Act to "bolster fairness and transparency" in consideration of interstate natural gas pipelines.

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-VA) has introduced the *Public Engagement at FERC Act* (S. 1240), which would amend the Federal Power Act to establish an Office of Public Participation and Consumer Advocacy at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

A package of House legislation focused on how low-income and minority communities are impacted by climate change was introduced by Reps. Donald McEachin (D-VA), Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), and Nanette Diaz Barragan (D-CA). The three bills would affirm the commitment of the House of Representatives to environmental and public health policies that protect all Americans, establish an Office of Environmental Justice at the EPA, and create a White House Office of Environmental Justice.

Congressional Hearings

On June 8 the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing to consider cost trends in emerging energy technologies. The committee heard from witnesses who detailed cost reductions in oil and natural gas, renewables, energy storage, and alternative fuel vehicles.

On June 12, the full House of Representatives approved ten energy-related bills, including a bill to promote a 21st century energy and manufacturing workforce, the *Streamlining Energy Efficiency for Schools Act of 2017*, the *Hydropower Permit Extension Act*, and seven other bills associated with hydropower projects.

On June 15 the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on the Environment advanced three bills to the full committee for consideration: 1) the *Brownfields Enhancement Economic Development and Reauthorization Act* by voice vote 2) the *Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act* by voice vote, and 3) the *Ozone Standards Implementation Act* by a vote of 12-8.

Energy Secretary Perry will provide testimony this week on the DOE budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Hearings are scheduled at the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, the Senate Appropriations Committee, and the House Appropriations Committee.

Executive Branch

US Bids Farewell to Paris Agreement

On June 1, President Trump announced that the United States will cease implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement and, according to a White House statement, “begin negotiations to either re-enter or negotiate an entirely new agreement with more favorable terms for the United States.” The decision to leave the Paris Agreement fulfills a campaign promise that then-candidate Trump made during the 2016 presidential campaign. The White House says that the agreement would cost the US economy nearly \$3 trillion in reduced output, over 6 million industrial jobs, and over 3 million manufacturing jobs. In response, a number of US states and cities have announced their intention to go forward with implementation of the Paris Agreement goals on a sub-national basis, with California Governor Jerry Brown going so far as to sign an agreement between his state and China on reducing emissions.

DOE Funding Announcements

The Department of Energy has announced funding for a number of projects:

- Approximately \$28 million for cost-shared research and development. Three new funding opportunities will advance technologies related to advanced combustion systems, advanced turbines, and gasification as part of the Office of Fossil Energy’s (FE) Advanced Energy System program. The funding will go to R&D projects related to: 1) Small-Scale Modularization of Gasification Technology Components for Radically Engineering Modular Systems (\$12.8 million), 2) Advanced Combustion Systems: Existing Plant Improvements and Transformational Technologies (\$10 million), and 3) University Turbine Systems Research Program (\$5.15 million).
- Up to \$32 million in funding for 16 projects as part of two new Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) programs: Energy-efficient Light-wave Integrated Enabling Networks that Enhance Datacenters (ENLITENED) and Power Nitride Doping Innovation Offers Devices Enabling SWITCHES (PNDIODES).
- Approximately \$15.8 million for 30 new projects aimed at discovery and development of “novel, low-cost materials” necessary for hydrogen production and storage and for fuel cells onboard light-duty vehicles. Selected projects will leverage national lab consortia launched under the Department’s Energy Materials Network (EMN) last year, in support of DOE’s materials research and advanced manufacturing priorities. Selected projects will cover the following topics: 1) PGM-free Catalyst and Electrode R&D, 2) Advanced Water Splitting Materials, 3) Hydrogen Storage Materials Discovery, and 4) Precursor Development for Low-Cost, High-Strength Carbon Fiber.

Authors