

OPENING STATEMENT
RANKING MEMBER BRAD MILLER

Joint I&O and E&E hearing, *“Impact of Tax Policies on the Commercial Application of Renewable Energy Technology”*

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

During the first eight years that I served on this committee there was a genuine feeling of bipartisanship. What united the Members of this committee was a support for new and emerging technologies and a belief that American innovation was going to create and sustain our future economy.

After this past experience I have been surprised that my Republican colleagues in this Congress, spend so much of our time trying to tear down the clean energy industry. It appears that my colleagues believe that sacrificing a homegrown, fledgling industrial sector is a small price to pay for scoring a few political points against the President.

The American public rejects the Republican’s assertions that we cannot innovate our way into a cleaner, more sustainable, and more affordable energy future for the country.

Will it happen overnight, or even with the first-term of a Presidency? Nope. The problem is too big. Will the conventional technologies be a part of our economy for the foreseeable future? You bet. For the most part, they are plentiful enough and the infrastructure is in-place. And they’re not going anywhere soon.

But, by starting now we can capitalize on the innovative capacity of our country and build the momentum required to upgrade our aging energy infrastructure with new, more sustainable technologies, meanwhile keeping our wealth at home. By taking these steps now, we’ll have another system in place as those conventional resources run out or get too expensive, or prove to be too toxic to our health.

That common sense approach gets mired in a tired and stale policy debate about the government “picking winners and losers” and “crowding out private investment”. As if, any government support for clean energy – from basic research to tax credits - amounts to unacceptable interference in the free market.

So, to my colleagues, if you don’t like tax incentives for clean energy projects, then I’ve got something that you should really hate – it is the hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars spent over the last century subsidizing the oil, gas, nuclear and coal industries.

If we are sitting here to ostensibly meet some House rule requiring us to examine the implications of tax incentives on programs in our jurisdiction – which this is not – then why are we not looking at tax and other forms of subsidies for ALL of the energy sector.

From straight tax breaks, to land deals, to limiting corporate liability in the case of accidents, let's at least be honest about what picking a winner really looks like. What we started recently doing for renewables is tiny in comparison to the decades of government support for conventional energy technologies.

For those that still think that we should let the free market decide on the best energy technologies, I have some bad news. There is no “free” market. Winners were chosen a long time ago, and Americans just have to make do with what we have, no matter the cost to our pocket books, national security, environment, and public health.

What we are trying to do with instruments like the 1603 program is level the playing field, and for the first time introduce REAL competition into the energy marketplace. Only when these vibrant new industries are up and running will consumers have a genuine choice about their energy use, and will America once again secure its position as a leader in a global technology race.

Thank you, and I yield back.