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Opening Statement
The Honorable Tom McClintock
Ranking Republican
House Water and Power Subcommittee
Joint Water and Power/Energy and Minerals Subcommittee Hearing
on

“Getting Past Gridlock: Models for Renewable Energy Siting and Transmission”
November 5, 2009

When I was named ranking member on the Water and Power Sub-Committee in July, I noted that up until the last generation, the purpose of federal water and power policy was to create an abundance of both. And I noted that in recent years, abundance has been replaced with the rationing of shortages as the principal objective of federal policy.

I warned that: “The result is increasingly expensive water and power that is now affecting our prosperity as a nation. We’re no longer looking at cost-benefit analyses of which projects make economic sense and which do not. Instead, practicality has been replaced by an entirely new ideological filter: those projects that ration or manage shortage are considered worthy regardless of feasibility or cost – and projects that produce abundance are to be discouraged regardless of their economic benefits or simple common sense.”

Today’s hearing illustrates this difference of policy dramatically.

Although the stated goal of this hearing is to relieve gridlock, the underlying agenda is to promote a so-called “green transmission system” – meaning facilities that limit transmission to sources that the majority finds ideologically pleasing – principally wind and solar – and that exclude electricity the majority finds ideologically displeasing – principally hydroelectric, coal, and nuclear.

Never mind that wind and solar are the two most expensive ways we have yet invented to generate electricity. Never mind that hydroelectric, coal and nuclear are the least expensive – and two of those (hydroelectric and nuclear) produce exactly ZERO air emissions.

Thus, the sub-committees charged with the responsibility of producing abundant power for the United States will spend much of this hearing seriously discussing setting

up an entirely duplicative transmission system solely for ideologically preferred sources of electricity and to the exclusion of all others.

But even this discussion becomes academic in the face of obstruction and opposition by the environmental left – both in Congress and in the Courts – to federally designated transmission corridors **THAT WILL HELP BRING MORE ENERGY TO OUR ELECTRICITY GRID.**

At a time when our nation needs to build 32,000 miles of lines over the next five years, we cannot afford to block energy generation and transmission projects because they aren't socially acceptable in San Francisco or the West Coast.

If you want to see where all this leads, look to California, whose consumers now pay the highest electricity prices in the continental United States.

In 1970, California **produced** 62% of its energy. By 2006, it **imported** 62% of its energy.

Three years ago, the city of Truckee was about to sign a long-term contract for electricity purchased from a new, state-of-the-art, EPA-approved coal-fired power plant in Utah. It was forced to abandon this contract because the power was not ideologically acceptable -- even to be imported. The replacement power now costs Truckee consumers nearly twice as much.

If this folly is imposed nationally, it will have disastrous consequences to the economy and to the quality of life of the people of our nation for generations to come.

Finally, I need to note that the environmental left has not only devastated California's once-abundant energy capacity, it has produced an unprecedented water crisis by the deliberate diversion of 200 billion gallons of water from Central Valley agriculture for the enjoyment and prosperity of the Delta Smelt.

I have been told that this is the last Water and Power Subcommittee hearing for this year. That's bad news for 40,000 unemployed San Joaquin Valley workers who have urgently asked Congress to turn the Delta pumps back on. It is also bad news for families across America who will see their grocery prices rise as a result of the destruction of a half-million acres of the most fertile and productive agricultural land in the nation.

I asked last week if we could hear directly in the field from all those impacted by the policy of this government, I have yet to receive a reply. Nevertheless, we appear to have plenty of time today to talk about "greening" our grid.

There's certainly no need to wonder why many people believe this Congress is disconnected from reality.