

Statement of Rep. Holt
On HR2170
July 13, 2011

The bill under consideration before us, HR 2170, is a highly problematic bill that has little upside and very significant downside, both in terms of protecting the environment and increasing renewable energy production.

Right now, a renewable energy project that is proposed on federal lands can get a green light, a yellow light, or a red light from the permitting agency. This bill proposes getting rid of the yellow light. What does that mean? Projects that could be viable will instead get the red light and not go forward. Let me state that again. Projects that could otherwise get built if their plans were tweaked could, under this bill, be killed. That means fewer megawatts of renewable energy production on public lands. We heard that from BLM. We heard it from BOEMRE. We heard it in the non-existent applause from industry for this bill during the legislative hearing.

The way to ensure that our public land managers are able to expeditiously permit renewable energy projects is not to handcuff them, but to make sure there are adequate human resources on hand to get the job done. However, it appears that Republican appropriators will be taking more than \$1 billion out of Interior Department budgets for fiscal year 2012, ensuring that BLM and the Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to fight an uphill battle.

In addition to keeping the land management agencies from doing their jobs, this bill would also reduce the ability of the public to participate in the process. And if the public is not given a meaningful opportunity to make their voice heard on the use of their lands, then—as the Majority well knows—the public will make their voice heard in the only other venue possible: the courts. The majority has repeatedly alleged that excessive litigation is the main reason for delays in permitting all sorts of development on public lands. Yet, instead of offering real solutions to help facilitate the approval of renewable energy on public lands, they offer a bill that will result in MORE litigation over renewable energy development, not less.

Again, as currently written, this bill has not been endorsed by any renewable energy industry groups. This should give members pause to consider why we are even considering this bill.

At a minimum-, significant changes are in order and I am pleased that we will have several Democratic amendments to consider. These amendments will ensure the bill does not unintentionally slow down renewable energy production, make public lands more attractive venues for renewable energy development, and create clean energy jobs in America. Hopefully, we'll be able to adopt some of those and really improve this bill.

I yield back.