

**For Delivery on March 18, 2021**  
**Hearing Entitled “21st Century Communities:  
Capitalizing on Opportunities in the Clean Energy Economy”**  
**Opening Statement**

First, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the verdict in Minnesota Tuesday, and the tragic shooting that same day, in Columbus in my state.

While Tuesday’s guilty verdict was the right one, we cannot mistake accountability for justice. True justice would mean George Floyd was still alive today, and true justice would not allow another shooting to happen while the verdict was being read.

Ma’Khia Bryant was 16 years old. She was a daughter, a high school student, a member of our Columbus and Ohio community. And now another family is in mourning.

This must be a turning point in our country. We must use this moment as a call for continued action to change our laws, and reform a broken justice system that has failed Black Americans over and over.

We have to reform our public safety system so that it protects all of us. And on this committee, we must continue to work to change all the ways our society has too often been set up to hold Black and brown Americans back – from housing to transit to our banking system.

I agree with my friend, colleague, and CBC Chair Joyce Beatty: This must be the catalyst to trigger actions far beyond today.

Today, on Earth Day, the Banking and Housing Committee returns to the subject of climate change. A few weeks ago we talked about risk. We’re Americans – we take on big problems, and we develop and manufacture and deploy the technologies of the future.

I come from a coal state. I know the legitimate fears that workers and communities in Appalachian Ohio have. We listen to them.

They live in towns where mining is a core part of their identity. They still think of themselves as “coal towns,” even though coal hasn’t been mined there since at least the Reagan Administration.

I also know there’s bravery, and courage, and dedication to family. Imagine going a mile or more underground to do dangerous work in tight, dark, dusty places, every single day.

On Monday, Cecil Roberts, the President of the United Mine Workers of America, showed that same grit, when he announced that the mineworkers see a path to clean energy – a path that supports the dignity of his members’ work, that gives them a seat at the table, and that finally brings the investment in their communities that they’ve been promised for decades.

We must show the kind of courage that Cecil Roberts and the United Mineworkers are showing.

We show no respect by selling communities a fantasy of returning to the past. People want the truth, and they want our commitment to help them grow the industries of the future. I want to see American manufacturing thrive, to strengthen American competitiveness, and to give communities the tools they need to be a part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century clean energy economy.

This isn’t some far-off dream world of science fiction.

We know we can seize these opportunities, because we're already doing it in:

- The Dry Lake Wind Power Project in Navajo County, Arizona,
- The Willow solar project about 30 minutes northwest of Wasilla, Alaska,
- Zero-emission bus manufacturing in Alabama, South Carolina, and Minnesota,
- In Kansas, where 7,000 megawatts of wind, solar, and battery storage helps power more than 2 million homes, and
- In Louisiana, where Gulf Island Fabrication built the foundations for the nation's first offshore wind project – the Block Island Wind Farm, in Rhode Island.

Nearly 350,000 Americans already work at solar energy jobs, and nearly 115,000 workers do the same in wind power.

That's only the beginning. 400,000 or more additional Americans could find jobs in solar and wind industries this decade.

This is about the workers in Perrysburg and Lake Township, Ohio, who manufacture First Solar's highly efficient PV solar panels. It's about the brilliant scientists at the University of Toledo, making breakthroughs in ultra high-efficiency and thin-film solar cells.

It's about RBI Solar, in Cincinnati, which emerged from the commercial greenhouse business and is now the fastest-growing photovoltaic racking company in North America.

It's about the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority, in Canton, Ohio. SARTA has built one of the largest hydrogen fuel cell bus fleets in the nation, and lends its buses to help other transit agencies test the deployment of American-made buses that have zero tailpipe emissions.

And it's about Emerson, founded in 1890 as an electric fan company, and its 21<sup>st</sup> Century collaboration with the University of Dayton on high-efficiency and sustainable heating, ventilation, and air conditioning technologies for residential and commercial use.

This country laid 200,000 miles of railroad tracks. We electrified the cities and the countryside and everywhere in between. We sent John Glenn into orbit. And our continued embrace of innovation put into the hand of every cellphone customer a more powerful computer than NASA used for the Apollo program.

Why would we stop now?

Our predecessors didn't say "No" to Henry Ford because of the buggy whip lobby.

And we aren't going to say "No" to innovation in the clean energy economy.

These new industries got a big boost at the turn of this century when those George W. Bush and Rick Perry – noted hippies, both – pushed renewable development in Texas.

Texas which now leads the country in electricity from wind power. Next in line are Iowa, Oklahoma, Kansas, and North Dakota – collectively known as the "Saudi Arabia of wind."

The growth in renewables in those states and across the country is providing good-paying jobs, giving farmers and ranchers another source of income, contributing to cleaner air and water, and saving people money.

Retrofitting our houses and apartments to make them more energy-efficient and resilient means lower utility bills for families every month.

Businesses are already investing and innovating because they know it improves their bottom line. Utilities and rural electric co-ops are embracing new technologies not only because their ratepayers are demanding it, but also because their business models dictate using whatever provides reliable electricity at the lowest price.

More and more, that's clean energy.

The choice we face isn't between keeping our communities frozen in time, or putting people to work in new industries.

Even if we do nothing, change is coming. Clean energy jobs are the jobs of the future.

The only question is whether they will be American jobs.

If we fail to invest in clean energy R&D, to retool our factories, and to play a leadership role, other countries will fill the void.

China is already spending billions on clean energy research and innovation. So are Germany and Japan.

We need to stop allowing the Chinese government and its subsidized industries profit off our inventions.

Let's create 21<sup>st</sup> century communities. Let's create more, better-paying jobs in more places, let's bring down people's energy costs, and let's pave the way for another century led by American innovation.

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