Prepared Remarks of U.S. Senator George V. Voinovich

"HEARING ON S. 1733, CLEAN ENERGY JOBS AND AMERICAN POWER ACT"
Committee on Environment and Public Works
Washington D.C.
October 27, 2009

Madam Chairwoman,

Climate change is a serious and complex issue that deserves our full attention. I acknowledge your commitment to timely legislation, but the abbreviated process by which this legislation is moving is not conducive to thoughtful, bipartisan climate change legislation.

This may be the single most significant piece of legislation that has ever come before this committee, touching every sector of the economy and having immense energy, economic, environmental and national security consequences. Yet, despite our requests of earlier this year, the committee plans no legislative hearings on specific bill text; rather, we will proceed with conceptual hearings only. Now, I am told that we will proceed to a mark-up, and a final vote, on November 3rd.

I note that, on legislation of significant importance, the Senate has a history of expending the time and consideration necessary to achieve broad, bipartisan support before reporting legislation out of committee. For example, when considering the American Clean Energy Leadership Act (ACELA), the Senate Energy Committee held 19 formal hearings and 11 open business meetings over a span of five and a half months before favorably reporting a bill with bipartisan support.

Following a similar process during consideration of this legislation is important because we cannot afford to get this wrong. At this point we do not fully understand how this legislation will impact GDP, or the price, supply and reliability of electricity, gasoline and other commodities that millions of Americans depend upon every day. What's more, we don't know if the bill will have any appreciable impact on climate change.

EPA's recent economic analysis of the Kerry-Boxer Climate Bill fails to provide answers to these questions. Instead, it compares and contrasts various provisions of S.1733 with Waxman-Markey bill.

First, a credible legislative process on Kerry-Boxer cannot be supported by a piecemeal analysis based upon estimates from the House bill. Second, EPA did not model all of the Waxman-Markey's major provisions and included in their assessment assumptions concerning the timing and availability of clean energy technologies (e.g. CCS and nuclear) and offsets that defy technological, practical and political realities.

We do have comprehensive analyses from various outside groups on the possible impacts of Waxman-Markey. For example, the American Council for Capital Formation has concluded that by 2020 the House bill could reduce household income in my home state of Ohio by up to $261 per year on average, increase energy costs by up to 20 percent, and result in a net loss of more than 100,000 jobs. But this is no substitute for EPA providing a comprehensive, unbiased assessment of the bill.

I have been working with EPA for a number of months to correct these deficiencies. And while we have made progress on that front, we now face a hurried political agenda. At this stage of the game, I would be willing to release my hold on Robert Perciasepe if EPA is given the time necessary to provide a comprehensive analysis on the bill before we proceed to mark-up.

Last year's bill – the Lieberman-Warner proposal – saw a miserable showing on the Senate floor. It gathered only 32 votes on the Senate floor – and subsequent to the vote, 9 of the Senators voting to limit debate sent Senator Reid a letter saying they wouldn't have votes for the bill on final passage. I predict that if we rush this bill through committee without a considered, thoughtful amendment process, we will have a similar result.

Madam Chairwoman when this committee was considering the Clear Skies Act – legislation that was far less complicated or far reaching – several analyses were completed as we considered legislative text. I recall that Senators Baucus, Carper, Chaffee and Obama were adamant that we have an EPA analysis on their alternative proposals before moving forward. In fact, even after the administration gave them 10,000 pages of analyses, they delayed the mark-up three times. I insist that similar consideration be afforded to us in this process.

In closing, I reference a October 21, 2009 New York Times article, which states in regard to Copenhagen: "the United States and many other … countries have concluded that it is more useful to take incremental … steps toward a global agreement rather than to try to jam through a treaty." The article goes on to say: "[US] officials and Congressional leaders have said that final legislative action on a climate bill would not occur before the first half of next year." So Madam Chairwoman, the question I have for you and Senator Kerry is: why are you trying to jam this legislation through Committee when it is unlikely we will move legislation or that a treaty will be ratified this year?

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