

**Testimony of General President Brent Booker
Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA)**

U.S Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

**Hearing to Examine the Federal Environmental Review and
Permitting Processes, Part II**

January 28, 2026

Good morning, Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you once again to discuss permitting reform on behalf of the more than 530,000 skilled and dedicated members of the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) whom I have the honor and privilege to serve as General President.

Our members are the backbone of America's infrastructure. Our members build and maintain this nation's highways, roads, bridges, and tunnels. We construct schools, hospitals, arenas, and skyscrapers. And we build and support America's energy infrastructure which includes wind, solar, nuclear, hydro, and pipelines. Simply put: LIUNA builds America.

Our workforce is among the most highly trained and safety-focused in the world. We deliver projects on time, on budget, and safely, because our members take pride not only in the work they do, but in the communities they serve.

Yet today, far too much of that work is being stalled, delayed, or canceled altogether. For decades, outdated permitting laws have been weaponized to obstruct critical infrastructure. Projects, regardless of size, now take years longer than necessary to receive approval.

For many stakeholders, these delays show up as numbers on a spreadsheet. For a LIUNA member, they mean something very different. They mean another day without a paycheck. Another day without earning healthcare eligibility. Another day without a pension credit.

Construction workers are paid by the hour, and so are their benefits. Our members build careers by moving from project to project. When those projects are delayed or halted, livelihoods are put on hold. This is not abstract. This is real.

Across the country, particularly in the energy sector, projects that are fully permitted, fully financed, and ready to begin construction are routinely derailed by endless litigation. A project can be approved one day and tied up in court the next.

In far too many cases, developers now spend more time in court than it would take our members to physically build the project.

This is especially true for energy infrastructure. Regardless of the energy source, developers face a maze of duplicative reviews, shifting regulatory standards, and serial lawsuits driven not by legitimate environmental concerns, but by opposition to development itself.

These delays do not protect communities. They do not lower emissions. And they do not strengthen our economy. They simply prevent infrastructure from being built and keep American workers on the sidelines.

That is why LIUNA has supported permitting reform for more than a decade including the House's recently passed SPEED Act. It addresses some of our issues on permitting reform. Most notably: proper judicial review timelines. Moreover, while the House was able to advance some elements of project certainty, it ultimately was watered down in order to appease a small group of extremists who don't understand the importance of having project certainty. And so, the SPEED Act represents a step in the right direction, but it is far from sufficient.

Significant barriers within the permitting process remain unresolved. One of the most persistent is Section 401 water quality certification. States should be required to issue a clear yes or no decision within a defined timeframe. If a project meets the standards, it should be approved. If it does not, the state should deny the application, explain the deficiencies, and allow the applicant to correct them and reapply.

Instead, states often allow these reviews to languish indefinitely, effectively stalling critical infrastructure projects without accountability. That uncertainty delays investment, drives up costs, and puts good-paying construction jobs at risk.

We believe projects can move forward without sacrificing worker safety, community protections, or environmental standards. But any permitting reform must also address two glaring failures in our current system: project certainty at the highest level and energy transmission. What good is permitting generation if we cannot connect power to the grid? Without transmission reform in conjunction to permitting, energy projects, no matter how clean or necessary, will remain stranded. That reality threatens reliability, affordability, and job creation.

When I testified before this Committee last year, I spoke about project deniers and serial litigators who exploit procedural loopholes to stop construction. But today, the greatest threat to project certainty is not litigation alone, it is the politics being played with our member's jobs.

Unfortunately, this Administration has eliminated and threatened to eliminate thousands of construction jobs. We have seen the canceling of funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act; the halting of Inflation Reduction Act projects; and the use of executive authority to revoke permits from already approved, privately financed infrastructure projects.

In some cases, those decisions came just days before the Christmas holiday, sending thousands of workers home without pay. These actions raise a fundamental question for this Committee: What good is permitting reform if any project, no matter how far along, can be shut down at the stroke of a pen?

Nowhere is this clearer than in offshore wind where we have seen the halting of offshore lease sales which have upended the industry and forced projects to withdraw construction plans entirely. In 2022, I was proud to have helped negotiate and implement the National Offshore Wind Agreement while serving in my previous position of Secretary Treasurer of the North America's Building Trades Unions. This was a historic and monumental agreement that would have delivered thousands of high-quality union jobs across the country. Many of the projects built under that agreement are now being terminated.

As I said earlier, for our members, this is not politics. These are paychecks. These are healthcare hours. These are retirement credits.

At a time when energy demand is surging driven by manufacturing growth, electrification, and data infrastructure the United States cannot afford instability. Permitting reform without project certainty is meaningless. Workers cannot build what the government decides to play politics with and refuses to allow to proceed.

This issue is bigger than politics. It is about global competitiveness. It is about energy security. It is about ensuring the United States leads not lags in the future of energy production. All energy production.

And most importantly, it is about ensuring that working people have access to middle-class careers, family-sustaining wages, and secure retirements.

LIUNA urges this Committee to seize this moment not for symbolic reform, but for real, durable permitting reform that allows projects to move forward, protects communities, and keeps Americans working.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I look forward to your questions.