


**Below is the opening statement of Chairman Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) as delivered.**

*"Today we will continue our discussion on the need to modernize our federal environmental review and permitting process.*

*"I would like to begin by thanking my colleagues who are here with me, and in particular Ranking Member Whitehouse, for their drive to elevate problems in our current permitting regime and to work constructively together. It's what we need to do.*

*"Over the past year, we have all discussed how the existing structure pits uncertainty and the misapplication and abuse of our laws, against American prosperity. We have had fruitful discussions, yet we are now a year older. This is sometimes the never-ending story on permitting, but we're going to get an end to that story, I hope. And we are still seeking common ground on practical and durable solutions.*

*"If Congress can deliver these critical solutions, we will unleash the investment required to build American infrastructure, unlock the supply of essential commodities and materials, grow our manufacturing, improve affordability by lowering prices, and create economic opportunity across our entire country.*

*"Without Congressional action, we will continue to see the pattern of the last two decades. Each new administration will reverse the policies of the last, eroding*

*trust of American businesses and workers and ensuring we cannot plan or build for either the present or for our future.*

*"This is not just speculation. We have all had communities we represent impacted by projects that were delayed or outright canceled by new administrations. I know West Virginia families have experienced this deep disappointment on multiple occasions.*

*"So, I say to all my colleagues today: I know your pain, all the way around, and I want Congress to address it now. Let's remove the politics from permitting once and for all.*

*"To do that, we need to think creatively, learn from the existing system's failures and craft solutions to align our permitting laws with what the Americans want and need: affordability, predictability and opportunity. And we will do that by protecting the air that we breathe, the water that we drink and the land that we love.*

*"We all know EPW's long tradition of bipartisan legislation on tough issues. This is an important reason that I joined this Committee when I was first elected to the Senate over a decade ago and how I approach my role as Chairman.*

*"I called this hearing with the Ranking Member with the intent to get us back on the path to fruitful compromise through identifying both the urgent need to act on reform and the scope of priorities we must address.*

*"Turning to the policies for permitting reform, my priorities remain largely the same:*

- *This legislation must be bipartisan to be successful and durable.*
- *This legislation must be project neutral.*

- *This legislation must create predictability, consistency and finality in securing a permit.*
- *This legislation must bring accountability to every stage of the process.*
- *This legislation must go beyond NEPA to address issues with our core permitting laws and processes.*
- *This legislation must include provisions that address judicial review of fully permitted projects.*
- *Finally, this legislation must be written in collaboration with our colleagues on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to address issues within their jurisdiction, and we've been working steadily with them.*

*"I have spent the last year listening to the Ranking Member and my Democrat colleagues as well as the priorities of the current Administration in order to understand what legislative policies would meet each of their stated goals and concerns.*

*"I think our goals share more in common than most would admit, and there are many sensible compromises that are in the best interest of the American people to unlock our development, grow our economy, increase supply and decrease prices in our states and communities. This growing consensus demands action now or we are likely to miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.*

*"The House acted last month by passing bipartisan reforms to NEPA and the Clean Water Act. It is now time for the Senate to act, so we invited these witnesses here today for two main reasons.*

*"First, they can share with us the pressing need to act this year on reforms and what we will leave on the table if we are unsuccessful. Second, they can share their invaluable perspectives on the most important reforms to truly unleash America's potential and relieve the economic pressure Americans are facing across the nation.*

*“I look forward to making progress with all of you and hearing your insights.”*

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