

House and Senate hold hearings on energy efficiency legislation

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On April 30, both the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held hearings on energy efficiency bills working their way through each chamber.

House Democrats object to a provision in the draft House Title IV Energy Efficiency bill that would remove the 2007 directive to reduce government reliance on fossil fuels and eliminate fossil fuel-based energy in new or renovated government buildings by 2030. The current draft of the bill would also require the Department of Energy (DOE) to revisit their new rule prohibiting homeowners from buying new “non-condensing” gas furnaces, which House Republicans feel is burdensome. House Democrats expressed desire for legislation that improves energy efficiency and does not undercut existing efficiency gains.

In the Senate hearing, Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) voiced concerns about potential redundancy and duplication in an energy bill proposed by Senator Al Franken (D-MN). Sen. Franken’s American Energy Efficiency Act (S. 1063) would amend title VI of the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 to establish a federal energy efficiency resource standard for electricity and natural gas suppliers. Chairwoman Murkowski argued that Sen. Franken’s bill might overlap with state initiatives. Senators John Hoeven (R-ND) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ) also expressed concern over potentially burdensome regulations or redundant programs.

DOE Deputy Assistant Secretary Kathleen Hogan testified that the proposed programs for fossil fuel phase-outs, gas furnace standards, and green building programs were complementary rather than redundant. Although DOE is still reviewing details on the bills, Hogan expressed tacit support for the Senate Shaheen-Portman Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act (S.720) and Senator Corey Gardner’s (R-CO) Energy Savings Through Public-Private Partnerships Act of 2015 (S.858) which promote energy savings performance in contracts including utility energy service contracts.

Sources: E&E News
