

Energy and Natural Resources Committee passes comprehensive energy bill

July 30, 2015

On July 30, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee passed its Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2015 (S.____), which addresses energy efficiency, infrastructure, supply, and government funding and oversight. After three days of markup, the committee voted 18 to 4 to move the bill to the Senate floor for a vote. The Offshore Production and Energizing National Security Act of 2015 (S.____), a separate bill that would lift the US ban on exporting crude oil, also passed the committee on the same day. The wide-ranging energy legislation covers several topics. Title I addresses energy efficiency in buildings, appliances, and manufacturing. Title II sets administrative and judicial policy for reviewing applications to construct and operate natural gas export facilities. Title III designates hydroelectric power as a renewable resource, sets agendas for geothermal, marine hydrokinetic, and methane hydrate energy development, and prompts the Department of Energy (DOE) to research carbon capture technology; this section also authorizes a national assessment of critical mineral resources and a research and development program for critical minerals that was previously introduced as a separate bill. Title IV includes legislation on coordinating federal energy-water activities, funding for DOE research and for Advanced Research Projects Agency – Energy (ARPA-E), energy grid reliability, and federal land management.

The Committee also approved a series of amendments to the bill. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) added an amendment that would require a government study of the “implications of exporting liquefied natural gas with respect to consumers and the economy.” Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) added an amendment to expedite the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s licensing and permitting process for natural gas infrastructure projects. The bill’s prospects in the Senate are uncertain, but the committee’s bipartisan support will likely improve its chances.

Sources: E&E News, Senate.gov

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