

DIRTY DISTRACTION: THE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES ACT OF 2017 (S.1460)

The Energy and Natural Resources Act of 2017 (S.1460) would pave the way for fossil fuel expansion, locking in decades of dirty energy and undermining the necessary clean energy transition.

The best available science shows an urgent need move off fossil fuels to avoid severe disruptions to our communities, our economy, and the planet. Burning the oil, gas, and coal reserves in already operating wells and mines would take us beyond globally agreed climate limits.¹ Promoting new fossil fuels in the face of our climate crisis represents the latest form of climate denial. We simply cannot afford new infrastructure that expands fossil fuels.

Yet, this dirty energy bill:

Speeds up approval of Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) export terminals [Sec. 2201]

The bill requires the Department of Energy to issue a decision on whether to authorize large-scale infrastructure projects within 45 days of issuance of the final environmental review. This rushes the timeline for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to thoroughly evaluate the review and undercuts the public's ability to ensure that projects will not harm communities and ecosystems impacted by terminals and related pipelines, storage facilities and other infrastructure. More LNG export terminals means more gas pipelines, more fracking, and more climate pollution.

Forces federal and state agencies to give “deference” to FERC in gas project review process [Sec. 3103]

FERC has a long history of rubber-stamping gas pipelines and other infrastructure projects while ignoring concerns raised by economists, climate scientists, and impacted communities about avoidable costs and environmental harm. S.1460 makes FERC the lead in ensuring gas projects comply with the National Environmental Policy Act - cutting off avenues for communities to appeal to state and other federal agencies to help stop pipelines. The bill also requires any federal or state agency, local government or tribe participating in the review process make a final decision no later than 90 days after FERC considers an application to be complete, making it all but impossible for impacted communities to wade through complex project documents and raise challenges in time. Rushing FERC to approve a natural gas buildout would undermine the public interest and U.S. climate goals.²

Wastes billions on boondoggle coal projects [Sec. 3402]

In an act of climate denial and ignoring clear trends in the national energy market, the bill establishes a new coal technology program to “ensure the continued use of the abundant, domestic coal resources.” It authorizes \$3.1 billion over 5 years for carbon capture research, development, and demonstration projects - even as the nation's premiere “clean

¹ Oil Change International. The Sky's Limit. September 2016. http://priceofoil.org/content/uploads/2016/09/OCI_the_skys_limit_2016_FINAL_2.pdf

² Stockman, L. A Bridge Too Far: How Appalachian Basin Gas Pipeline Expansion Will undermine U.S. Climate Goals. Oil Change International. July 2016. <http://priceofoil.org/2016/07/22/a-bridge-too-far-report/>

coal” power plant shuts its doors.³ Unproven and energy-intensive technologies like carbon capture do nothing to protect communities from the full impacts of coal power - from mining, to transport, to coal ash disposal.

More handouts to dirty energy development

In addition, S.1460 sets up a pilot program to streamline the review and approval of permits to drill for oil and gas on the nation’s public lands [Sec. 3104], and authorizes Congress to spend \$175 million on research and development for extracting methane hydrates [Sec. 3101] - another potential source of fossil fuel that we cannot afford to burn.

No love for renewables

Surprisingly, fast-growing and increasingly cost-competitive wind and solar power get little mention in this bill. And the renewable energy provisions that are included are undermined by support for fossil fuel infrastructure that would entrench dirty energy in our country’s power mix and put us on a path to climate chaos.

Vote “no” on S. 1460

Expediting the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure undermines what the American people want and need - action on climate change and the creation of good jobs in the sustainable energy sector. Passing the Energy and Natural Resources Act of 2017 would be a giveaway to the oil, gas, and coal industry and an act of climate denial.



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³ “Southern’s clean coal experiment ends with Mississippi order.” Bloomberg, 6 July 2017. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-07-06/southern-s-clean-coal-experiment-officially-dead-on-state-order>