



Committee: House Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Energy
Event: [America's Energy Infrastructure: Authorizing Pipeline Safety](#)
Date: March 3, 2026

Executive Summary:

On March 3, the House Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Energy held a hearing to discuss legislation, the Pipeline Safety Authorization Act of 2026 ([H.R. 1](#)), to reauthorize the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's (PHMSA) pipeline safety program.

- Members broadly agreed that bipartisan efforts to reauthorize pipeline safety are necessary and that PHMSA needs stable resources and modernized oversight to keep aging infrastructure safe.
- Republicans emphasized the importance of expanding pipeline infrastructure, keeping energy affordable, and avoiding overly strict regulations.
- Democrats stressed the need for stronger oversight, adequate funding, and attention to environmental and community safety concerns.

Member Toplines:

[Subcommittee Chair Bob Latta \(R-OH-05\)](#): Latta emphasized the role of PHMSA in ensuring the safe delivery of the nation's energy resources, including natural gas. Latta stressed that pipelines remain the safest and most efficient mode of energy transport. He said the Pipeline Safety Authorization Act of 2026 aims to reauthorize PHMSA for five years with a focus on safety and efficiency.

[Subcommittee Ranking Member Kathy Castor¹ \(D-FL-14\)](#): Castor stated that pipeline safety should be a bipartisan priority for the Committee and requires adequate resources, a robust workforce, and a regulator willing to ensure American safety. Castor pointed to previous bipartisan efforts on pipeline safety and emphasized her hopes that today's hearing would build upon those past successes. She expressed her disapproval of the Pipeline Safety Authorization Act of 2026, arguing that it was written without Democratic input and only reflects the priorities of oil and gas. Castor stressed the importance of making these industries safer while simultaneously addressing affordability.

[Full Committee Chair Brett Guthrie \(R-KY-02\)](#): Guthrie noted that the Pipeline Safety Authorization Act of 2026 is still a discussion draft and called for bipartisan efforts to find common ground on the bill. Guthrie emphasized the PHMSA's safety role and echoed Latta's sentiment that pipelines are the safest and most affordable form of fuel transport. He pointed to Winter Storm Fern as a clear demonstration of the benefits of pipeline transmission and storage networks.

¹ At the time of this memo's distribution, written testimony was not available for Subcommittee Ranking Member Kathy Castor, Full Committee Chair Brett Guthrie, and Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone.

Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone (D-NJ-06): Pallone stressed that bipartisan support is necessary to get reauthorization across the finish line and criticized the reauthorization bill as a Republican-only proposal. Pallone argued that the Trump Administration's actions significantly altered PHMSA in the last year, resulting in a reduction in workforce and resources. He stated that this Republican bill falls short, failing to include provisions from the PIPES Act ([H.R. 5301](#)) and reauthorizing programs to replace aging distribution pipelines. Pallone supported certain aspects of the bill, including the establishment of a voluntary information system and excavation programs.

Witness Toplines:

[Paul Roberti, Administrator, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration](#): Roberti stated that safety is an integral part of the Department of Transportation (DOT) and its work with PHMSA. He emphasized the need for a modern, safe, and reliable transportation network to ensure Americans have access to the energy needed to power their daily lives. Roberti argued that PHMSA is operating more efficiently and effectively than ever before under the Trump Administration.

Major Takeaways:

Pipeline Affordability

- Latta asked whether increasing pipeline infrastructure would lower energy prices. Roberti said absolutely and said the safest way to move energy for the electric grid is through pipelines.
- Pallone asked about the analysis of the financial benefit pipeline operators will gain from an enforcement waiver. Pallone expressed concern that the waiver jeopardizes the safety and profits of pipeline companies amid high energy bills.
 - Roberti stated that the waiver would be issued only if safety would not be compromised and doesn't expect it to be used frequently.
- Rep. **Gary Palmer** (R-AL-06) inquired about private investment for improving pipelines to meet energy needs. Roberti stated that the majority of pipelines in America are funded by private capital.
- Reps. **Scott Peters** (D-CA-50), **Rick Allen** (R-GA-12), **Jennifer McClellan** (D-VA-4), and Rep. **Gabe Evans** (R-CO-08) asked how PHMSA balances economic safety with environmental benefits. McClellan argued that there is no accountability or guarantee that the environmental and related safety concerns of impacted communities will be considered for these massive projects.
 - Roberti emphasized that containing products and avoiding leaks are essential. He also discussed the cost-benefit analysis of pipeline safety and explained that PHMSA implements rules that account for what is effective, both technically and economically.
 - Allen asked whether good policies should de-emphasize non-US benefits, given that they can result in extra costs without benefiting taxpayers, and Roberti disagreed.
- Rep. **Jake Auchincloss** (D-MA-04) asked about the cost analysis of methane leak detection, and Roberti responded that being technology-agnostic is very important.

Pipeline Safety, Regulations, and Enforcement Activity at PHMSA

- Latta and Guthrie inquired about priorities for safely expanding pipeline infrastructure. Guthrie also asked about balancing safety with caution to avoid overregulation. Reps. **August Pfluger** (R-TX-11) and **Julie Fedorchak** (R-ND-AL) also inquired about improving reliability and affordability, as well as enforcement mechanisms, through PHMSA reauthorization.
 - Roberti repeatedly mentioned that to be an effective, streamlined regulator, one must discuss compliance, enforcement, and accountability.
- Rep. **John Joyce** (R-PA-13) asked whether PHMSA's code reflected modern technologies.
 - Roberti mentioned writing concise, modern regulations that encompass current technologies to ensure transparency and industry understanding of what they need to comply with. He also mentioned conducting inspections to ensure code compliance. Roberti stated that less is more when it comes to regulations and that the agency is focused on safety results. He said PHMSA focuses on leak detection through resource deployment.
- Reps. Castor and **Rob Menendez** (D-NJ-08) asked what PHMSA is doing to address safety concerns related to pipeline incidents. They both expressed concern about the PHMSA workforce's ability to keep pipelines safe, given a 14 percent decrease in employees since 2024 and a 50 percent cut in pipeline safety enforcement in 2025.
 - Roberti mentioned the replacement of aging infrastructure, but expressed concerns over who pays for it, whether taxpayers or industry.
 - Roberti repeatedly emphasized that the hope is that, by telling operators where PHMSA will be focusing inspections, industry will be more diligent and invest more resources in those efforts: leak detection, integrity management in high-consequence areas, and excavation damage prevention. PHMSA is working toward a 'zero-incident future'.
 - Rep. **Mariannette Miller-Meeks** (R-IA-01) emphasized the need for a modern regulatory framework when it comes to achieving the goal of a 'zero-incident future.'
- Pallone inquired about the reduction in PHMSA enforcement activity and cited that PHMSA opened 50 percent fewer enforcement cases than it did on average during the Biden Administration. Roberti said he expects a rebound in enforcement activity.
- Peters emphasized the Gas Pipeline Leak Detection and Repair Act of 2025 ([H.R. 4818](#)) that he introduced to codify the draft rule and modernize decades-old gas pipeline standards.
- Menendez inquired about the Satartia, Mississippi pipeline rupture incident, to which Roberti replied that PHMSA held the management program accountable and ensured that the operators followed the code.
- Rep. **Troy Balderson** (R-OH-12) stated that overlapping regulatory programs for in-plant piping systems create uncertainty and lead to contract compliance issues.
 - Roberti stated that 'swim lanes' are important to avoid overlapping work among agencies and noted that PHMSA may issue a final rule on implant piping, although the timing of the rule is unknown. Roberti acknowledged that there is room for improvement.

- Fedorchak inquired about the benefits of state partnerships and the potential for PHMSA to expand cooperative federalism and add more state inspectors.
 - Roberti emphasized his participation in the Office of Pipeline Safety Leadership and said that PHMSA supports the need to coordinate with federal partners and state authorities.
- McClellan emphasized the importance of maintaining strong oversight of the chemicals transported by the 3.3 million-mile pipeline network. She echoed the sentiments of Castor and Pallone, stating that the proposed legislation lacks bipartisan input and falls short in carrying out the important task of overseeing America's pipelines.
- Rep. **Doris Matsui** (D-CA-07) mentioned the irreparable harm to ecosystems and local businesses due to the closure of fisheries and beaches caused by the Sable offshore oil pipeline incident and expressed concern over PHMSA's attempt to overrule state authorities to restart this pipeline. Matsui also mentioned the Refugio State Beach oil spill and questioned Roberti on whether PHMSA appropriately addressed the corroded, defective pipeline. Roberti replied, "Yes," and stated that PHMSA had deployed investigators.
 - Rep. **Kim Schrier** (D-WA-08) also mentioned BP's Olympic Pipeline incident when explaining the importance of maintaining effective leak detection system performance standards.
 - Roberti stated that the states, rather than PHMSA, had jurisdiction over the majority of pipeline incidents.
- Rep. **Russell Fry** (R-SC-07) probed Roberti about pipeline safety, including opportunities for criminals to attack pipelines and related infrastructure, posing a danger to communities. He pointed out that the discussion draft included a provision to close a loophole that limited prosecution for harm to pipeline infrastructure and operations. Roberti said PHMSA is focused on both physical and cybersecurity risks.

Public Awareness and Keeping the Public Informed

- Rep. **Diana Harshbarger** (R-TN-01) asked Roberti to outline best practices for implementing damage-prevention programs and asked about specific steps firms could take to strengthen public awareness and compliance with 8-1-1 requirements nationwide.
 - Roberti explained steps taken, including PHMSA issuance of one-call grants to our state partners for excavation-prevention dollars, leveraging the grant program to share best practices among states, and focusing on training and supervision. He also stated that they will prioritize awards to organizations that focus on educating entities and increasing community engagement to raise awareness of pipelines and support emergency responders.
- Miller-Meeks also inquired about keeping the public informed after an incident, and Roberti responded that PHMSA has community liaisons available to assist the community with any questions.
- Rep. **Paul Tonko** (D-NY-20) highlighted PHMSA's decision to terminate nine research and development grants, primarily focused on safety and corrosion issues in carbon dioxide and hydrogen pipelines. Tonko questioned why PHMSA would not support grants to improve the safety of pipeline operations and educate communities. Roberti responded that the specific grants were not an appropriate use of taxpayer money.

- Reps. **Lizzie Fletcher** (D-TX-07) and **Kevin Mullin** (D-CA-15) both expressed concern about PHMSA's lack of resources for proper training and research.
 - Fletcher noted a \$200 million decrease in training funding, and Mullin pointed to the bipartisan proposal coming out of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee and stated that this partisan reauthorization has at least \$150 million less in funding for replacing dangerous, outdated gas distribution lines.
- Evans asked about the information-sharing systems in the pipeline safety bill and how they enhance public safety. Roberti mentioned leveraging artificial intelligence to figure out ways to extract data from inspection tools and share it, making the pipeline system safer and achieving a zero-incident future.