Introduction

- Chairman Murkowski, thank you for convening the Committee today. It is an honor to sit next to you, my dear friend, at our first business meeting and our first full Committee hearing this Congress.
- I am honored to serve as Ranking Member of this Committee, which has been around for 42 years as of yesterday.
- And I look forward to working with you to tackle the biggest energy and natural resources questions facing our country as well as beginning discussions on how we as a Committee can contribute pragmatic solutions to the climate challenges facing our country and the world.
- I'd also like to thank Senators Wyden, King, and Cortez-Masto for continuing to serve as ranking members on the Public Lands, Parks, and Water and Power Subcommittees.
- I am glad to turn over the ranking membership of the Energy Subcommittee to Senator Heinrich and thank him for agreeing to serve in that role.
- I'll take a moment to briefly touch on one rule change before us today, which allows for filing deadlines to be set for amendments.
- I want to be clear that my understanding is that this is to provide all of our Members more notice and time to consider what they'll be asked to vote on, rather than to limit the ability of our Members to offer amendments. We have drafted this to encourage collaboration and maintain flexibility.
- I am excited to welcome these witnesses here today with Chairman Murkowski and look forward to the conversation.

Importance of West Virginia

- In 2016, West Virginia ranked fifth among the states in total energy production, according to the Energy Information Administration (EIA). Our state has also consistently exported more electricity than it consumes.
- For that reason, other states depend on West Virginia for reliable electric generation, as well as coal and natural gas production.
- In fact, West Virginia is the seventh-largest producer of marketed natural gas in the nation.
- Our underground gas storage capacity accounts for almost 6% of the nation's total capacity, which is critical in the winter months for the Northeast.
- West Virginia, along with its neighbors, also has the historic opportunity to develop an Appalachian Storage Hub.
- This innovative regional storage and distribution hub would attract manufacturing investment, create jobs, and reduce the rejection rate of natural gas liquids like ethane, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- West Virginia also accounts for 11% of the nation’s coal production, and is among the top three states with the largest amount of recoverable coal reserves at producing mines.
- Despite coal production declines around the country, Appalachian coal production increased for the second year in a row, based largely on growth in coal exports to India, Ukraine, Brazil, and other nations.

- Beyond my state's leadership on energy production, I know West Virginia is committed to solving the climate crisis.
- The impacts of climate change are felt in every economy and every community across the world – and that includes West Virginia.
- I have never met a West Virginian who wants to drink dirty water and breathe dirty air – the urgent need to clean up our climate is felt by everyone and there is no reason rural America cannot be part of the cleaner energy solutions we are working towards.
- We must work together to solve this problem and act now to lead the world in the commercialization of carbon reducing energy technology that keeps energy generation resources cost competitive and reliable – 24/7.
- This is especially important during events like last week's polar vortex – where I know communities around the country are grateful for the energy supply and reliability that West Virginia provides.

Polar Vortex

- Last week's brutal cold provided another test case for how our electricity grid is often stressed and changing.
- On Wednesday and Thursday, regional grid operators for the northeast (PJM) and Midwest (MISO) put emergency procedures in place.
- PJM serves approximately 65 million customers and includes my home state of West Virginia.
- On Thursday morning, PJM had one of its top 10 winter peak demand days in the last 5 years.

- While the system performed well, rising natural gas demand made it economical to bring on coal to keep the lights on and homes warm.
- And coal will continue to be a critical part of the fuel mix in extreme weather situations like this.
- Even in states with aggressive clean energy goals, if it gets cold, we will still need coal power.

The Role of the Energy Committee in the Climate Discussion

- Events like the polar vortex will continue to happen – continuing the importance of reliable energy.
- But it is clear as day. If the United States does not lead in developing the technologies that will incentivize China and India to burn coal and natural gas in a cleaner way, it will not matter how much we do here.
- In 2040, the International Energy Agency predicts that coal will make up about 51% of China's electric mix. For India, it could be up to 57%.
- That is why I am encouraged to see leaders like Bill Gates who is putting his money where his mouth is: in the clean energy race, particularly with respect to advanced nuclear technology.
- Climate change is real, and communities across our nation have suffered the destructive effects associated with it.
- In 2016, our little state was devastated by a flood that took the lives of 23 West Virginians. And in the last four years, I've asked the White House for emergency funding six times due to flooding.

- There is no silver bullet, but I've spoken with Chairman Murkowski and I look forward to innovation discussions and expected climate hearings to see how this committee can contribute to pragmatic solutions that work for every American.

Conclusion

- With that, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today.