

Oppose the Energy and Natural Resources Act of 2017, S. 1460. Stop the Dirty Energy Bill.

The Energy and Natural Resources Act of 2017 (S 1460) would lock in our dependence on fossil fuels for decades to come, directly undermining our country's efforts to stave off the worst effects of climate change.

The science is clear: we can no longer pursue fossil fuel energy sources and must rapidly transition to a renewable energy system.

Instead, this legislation:

- Expedites review of LNG export terminals requiring Department of Energy to issue a decision within 45 days of issuance of the final environmental review [Sec 2201]
- Requires a study on “regional economic impacts” of LNG exports by the Department of Energy [Sec 3102]
- Makes FERC lead agency in federal authorizations for natural gas projects, saying all other agencies must give “deference” to FERC; also, this language would require that all authorizations be issued within 90 days of FERC's considering the application complete [Sec 3103]
- Requires BLM to establish a single-state, 3-yearlong pilot program to streamline drilling permits for oil and gas in spacing units wherein the Federal Government does not own or hold more than 25 percent of the subsurface minerals and does not own or hold surface area [Sec 3104]
- Increase resources for development of extraction and discovery of methane hydrate deposit in US waters [Sec 3101]

Yet while the bill does this, and more, to extend our reliance on fossil fuels, its “Renewables” subtitle completely ignores solar and wind energy. If we are going to avoid catastrophic climate change, we cannot be passing energy legislation that does not aggressively promote the growth of wind and solar.

Expediting review of large-scale projects, such as LNG export terminals, and requiring a decision only 45 days after the issuance of the final environmental review undermines the transparency and prudence that federal actions should be premised on. This expedited review truncates the time necessary for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (“FERC”) to thoroughly evaluate the options outlined in the final environmental review. Further, it undercuts the public's ability to ensure that such wide-spanning projects will not threaten our communities and the habitats impacted by the terminals and the related pipelines, railways, and drilling sites.

Expediting the build-out of fossil fuel infrastructure takes us in exactly the wrong direction at a time when we must urgently transition to the low-carbon economy. Building LNG export terminals leads to expanded hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) for natural gas across this country, which requires the development of new pipelines, new compressor stations, storage facilities and new export terminals. In addition, increased production of domestic natural gas will feed the construction of new natural gas-fired power plants. Encouraging investment in fossil fuel infrastructure makes it more difficult to transition away from the dirty fossil fuels that are causing the climate catastrophe, rather than moving us towards a more sustainable energy future.

The LNG study is hopelessly skewed towards findings that will show positive economic impacts, while ignoring any and all harms LNG export driven fracking will have on local public health and environment.

Making FERC the lead agency in federal authorizations for natural gas projects and saying that agencies conducting authorizations should give “deference” to FERC includes explicitly making FERC the lead agency for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. In other words, under this provisions FERC, not the Environmental Protection Agency, would oversee compliance with NEPA for natural gas projects. In addition, the provision states that “all Federal authorizations required for a project or facility should be issued by not later than the date that is 90 days after the date on which an application is considered to be complete by the Commission.” Clearly this provision is designed to undermine proper evaluation of the environmental effects of proposed pipeline projects.

While we should be transitioning away from all fossil fuels, this bill authorizes \$175 million in new spending to research recovering of methane hydrates, a form of extreme energy the exploitation of which will hasten climate change.

For these reasons, we urge you to oppose S 1460.