



February 6th, 2019

National House Resources Committee Hearing

Longworth House Office Building

15 Independence Ave SE, Washington DC 20515

Greetings Chairman Grijalva,

Ranking Member Bishop and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

I'm Derrick Hollie president of Reaching America, an education and policy organization I developed to address complex social issues impacting African American communities.

We're focused on solutions not based on right- or left-wing views but what makes sense for a more united America.

One of the issues Reaching America does the most work on is reducing energy poverty across the board.

Energy Poverty exists when low income families or individuals spend up to thirty percent of their total income on their electric bill. And when this happens, people have to make tough choices like, do I eat today or pay the electric bill? Do I get this prescription filled or fill up my car with gas? We all know someone who faces these choices every month.

For members of the African American community, Energy Poverty is a reality. Members of our community don't have the luxury to pay more for green technologies. We need access to affordable energy to help heat our homes, power our stoves and get back and forth to work each day.

Through Reaching America I've had the opportunity to speak with thousands of African Americans in several states who question the rising cost of energy along with fees and subsidies they don't benefit from and how they struggle to keep up.

My passion for energy is deeply rooted, after graduating from college I worked as brakeman for Norfolk Southern Railways at Lambert's Point in Norfolk Virginia. Our job and responsibilities was loading coal ships that transported coal all around the world and I constantly ask the question, "If our coal and natural resources are good enough for other countries – why is not good enough for us here at home. My grandfather was also a black coal miner in Southwest VA. It's safe to say if it weren't for the energy industry, I wouldn't be here to speak with all of you today.

When the government creates policy, its first priority should be the welfare of the people, especially those impacted the hardest, rather than big businesses and special interests looking for a handout.

I'm also a member of Project 21 a National Black Leadership Organization. In our Blueprint for A Better Deal for Black America we focus on ten key areas for reform including "Minority Impact Assessments" for new regulations. This would be a major step toward increasing economic opportunities. And having input from Governors and community leaders the same way "Qualified Opportunity Zones" were created will establish a level of trust in communities that never existed before.

After all, the government requires environmental impact statements to estimate the effects of projects like roads and buildings on nature. Shouldn't the government act similarly when it comes to how regulations impact the population?

A minority impact assessment would create a list of all the positive and negative impacts a proposed regulation would have on factors including employment, wages, consumer prices and homeownership. This regulatory impact would then be analyzed for its effect on minorities in contrast to the general population.

The bottom line: any policy that contributes to energy poverty is a bad one for low income families and minority communities.

Fortunately, our nation has an abundant supply of natural gas that is a solution to our nation's energy questions. Recent polar vortex temperatures dropped so low in some areas that windmills couldn't turn. We need a plan B.

Natural gas is clean. The U.S. Energy Information Administration reports that almost two-thirds of the CO2 emission reductions from 2006 – 2014 came from the fuel shifting toward natural gas.

Natural gas is also reliable. Natural gas generation efficiently meets the needs of our nation's energy grid.

And natural gas is affordable. For many Americans, this allows them to not have to choose whether to keep the lights on or feed their families.

In closing, I'm all for protecting the environment and clean energy however until we have figure out a way to harness the sun, wind and water to sustain ourselves, we need to use what we have especially if it can lower energy cost, create jobs and boost the economy.