

Representative Nanette Diaz Barragán Testimony to Rules Committee Testimony on the HEROES Act (H.R. 6800), and the importance of including the ReWIND Act (H.R. 6707)

Thank you, Chair McGovern and Ranking Member Cole, for the opportunity to submit testimony to you on the HEROES Act.

I want to start by thanking House Leadership for their tireless work taking input from members and crafting this critical legislation that provides assistance to working families and state and local governments.

The intent of each of our aid packages is to help struggling Americans make it through this public health crisis. My concern is that the Trump Administration has undermined this intent with their implementation of the previous CARES package. Money designated to help families, workers and small businesses survive the COVID-19 pandemic is being diverted to prop up oil corporations contributing to climate change.

This cannot stand. I introduced the ReWIND Act with Senator Jeff Merkley, and more than 40 House and Senate cosponsors, to prevent the Trump Administration from bailing out the fossil fuel industry with CARES Act funds meant for pandemic relief. It also blocks several executive actions President Trump has taken or may attempt to take to benefit the fossil fuel industry at the expense of Americans' health and welfare.

Over the past two months, the Trump Administration has been working overtime for the fossil fuel industry. They have halted enforcement of environmental laws, accelerated the sale of

cheap public oil and gas leases, and altered the rules for Treasury and Federal Reserve lending programs.

Companies in the financially-stressed oil and gas industry took tens of billions of dollars in risky loans to fuel their reckless expansion in recent years. This left them in poor financial standing and should have made them ineligible for CARES Act relief funds, as this money is intended only for debts incurred by the pandemic.

A few weeks ago, President Trump declared on Twitter “We will never let the great U.S. Oil and Gas Industry down,” and instructed the Secretary of the Treasury to make taxpayer funds available.

Rushing to comply, the Federal Reserve quickly rolled out new eligibility rules for its Main Street Lending Program, easing restrictions on borrowing for heavily-indebted companies. The Energy Secretary admitted this week that Secretary Mnuchin worked closely with the Federal Reserve to adjust this program for oil companies. The investors who made risky bets in fracking do not deserve special access to bailout funds while credit-worthy businesses starve.

The guidelines for hundreds of billions in loans and bond buybacks administered by Treasury and the Federal Reserve are worse. They threw away CARES Act requirements that companies receiving assistance must use those funds to keep workers on their payrolls or limit executive compensation.

We have a responsibility to help those most impacted by this crisis, not corporate polluters with access to the President.

Further, we have a responsibility to take action on the climate crisis. The ReWIND Act serves as a critical check on the Trump administration as it oversees trillions in funding and removes environmental protections. We would do well by the American people to include it in our relief package, and I'll continue to advocate for its inclusion, as well as further bills in the coming months.