

Rep. Anna G. Eshoo Testimony  
Rules Committee Hearing on H.R. 1938  
The North American-Made Energy Security Act  
July 25, 2011

Pipeline safety is not a subject we can afford to take lightly. On September 10, 2010, there was a natural gas explosion in San Bruno, California, just north of my Congressional District, that killed eight people, injured dozens, and destroyed 55 homes.

We have been regulating natural gas pipelines since 1968, and we still see horrific explosions like the one in San Bruno. It's a dangerous business under the best of circumstances.

But to move forward with a tar sands pipeline, which we have no experience regulating, without a solid understanding of the safety issues, is an enormous and dangerous mistake.

We have heard strong, well-informed concerns that pipelines carrying tar sands and the chemical bitumen may pose greater safety risks than even those pipelines carrying conventional or synthetic crude.

At a June 16, 2011, hearing on pipeline safety held by the Subcommittee on Energy and Power, Cynthia L. Quarterman, Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, testified that her agency -- the one specifically tasked with researching and administering pipeline safety -- had not done any study analyzing the risks of these new pipelines. She said they'd be happy to do one. I think the American people would be happier, and safer, if they did.

My amendment would require PHMSA to complete a comprehensive review of the properties and characteristics of bitumen and the hazardous liquid pipeline regulations before the final Presidential Permit is issued.

This study is important for the safety of all Americans and will determine whether current regulations are sufficient to regulate pipelines used for the transportation of tar sands crude oil.

This approach makes sense because it's far less costly to build pipelines correctly than to try to fix or replace a line that's already built.

The recent oil spills that have occurred, particularly the spills from TransCanada's Keystone pipeline - - which leaked 21,000 gallons of crude in North Dakota - - are a warning to all of us that we need to get this right.

Let's protect lives, money and property, and take the proper precautions now.

For these reasons, I urge you to support my amendment.