Energy Bill, TSCA Reform Show Momentum Building for Congressional Solutions on Energy, Environment

By Ross Eisenberg | January 28, 2016 | Energy, Policy Experts, Shopfloor Policy

This week, the Senate is debating S. 2012, the Energy Policy Modernization Act, on the floor. The bill, introduced by Senate Energy Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and passed by the committee on a decisive 18-4 vote, is expected gain broad support from both sides of the aisle. There is a lot to like in the bill, including a wide range of measures on energy efficiency and improvements to the licensing process for liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports. The debate on S. 2012 comes on the heels of successful passage of legislation to reform the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) by the Senate at the end of 2015. (The House passed a similar TSCA reform bill earlier in the year by a 398-1 vote, and the two bills await a conference.)

For years, Washington earned a well-deserved reputation for gridlock and an inability to solve problems. But these two bills, much like the recent successes on tax, infrastructure and trade, are a sign that the gridlock may be starting to ease. And if that's the case, there are no shortage of energy and environmental issues that manufacturers would like some real, bipartisan solutions on. We talk about a lot of these in the our “Competing to Win” platform document, unveiled today by NAM President and CEO Jay Timmons as he kicked off this year's State of Manufacturing Tour.

First and foremost is the recently-enacted EPA ozone regulation. The strict new standard the EPA arrived at in October 2015 now places areas that had worked for years to improve their ozone levels back into a “no-grow zone,” which could threaten manufacturers' ability to get permits to build new facilities, expand existing facilities or improve the operations already in place. At a time when the economy is showing signs of tension, manufacturers do not need yet another hurdle to creating jobs, particularly when the old standard is just now being implemented and leading to substantial improvements to ozone levels. Manufacturers need relief from most punitive elements of the 2015 ozone standard, either through a delay
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