

## **GOP Lawmaker: U.S. Solar Panel Industry Could Fail**

MATTHEW DALY - Associated Press

Loans to solar panel manufacturers, such as ill-fated Solyndra Inc., are a poor bet and the solar panel industry itself could collapse in the U.S., a Republican House chairman said Thursday.

The solar industry immediately disputed the remark by Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., citing a report showing that solar panel installations were up nearly 70 percent in the second quarter of 2011, compared to the same period last year.

Issa, the chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, said the \$528 million loan to the now-bankrupt California solar energy company is just one example of the Obama administration's failed attempt to create green jobs.

Citing competition from China and other problems, Issa told reporters after the hearing: "It is reasonable to predict that we could have the collapse of the entire solar panel manufacturing business in America."

More than 100,000 Americans are employed in solar — twice as many as in 2009 — making solar the fastest-growing industry in America, said Rhone Resch, president of the Solar Energy Industry Association, an industry group. The industry includes more than 5,000 companies in all 50 states, Resch said.

The Obama administration said the solar industry and renewable energy in general were crucial to economic growth and job creation.

The debate over solar came as Issa's committee released a report titled, "How Obama's Green Energy Agenda is Killing Jobs." The report criticizes what it calls questionable accounting methods used by the Obama administration to count "green jobs" and says the term is vague and poorly defined.

"A green jobs-fueled recovery is a theory, and is yet unproven," Issa said. "There is a lot more green, in the way of cash, and a lot less energy and jobs than anticipated."

Democrats assailed the report, saying Issa had offered no evidence that the Obama administration was killing jobs. Rep. Gerald Connolly, D-Va., called the report intellectually dishonest and said its title showed Issa's "raw, partisan" agenda.

In reality, oil, coal and other fossil fuels receive more than 80 percent of federal energy subsidies, Connolly said.

Much of the committee's hearing Thursday was mired in partisan disputes, including

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Published on Chem.Info (<http://www.chem.info>)

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a lengthy debate over whether the driver of a hybrid bus qualified as holding a green job. Rep. Connie Mack, R-Fla., said the bus might be green, but not the driver.

"If I'm sitting in a chair that was made out of green material, does that make my job green?" Mack asked Labor Secretary Hilda Solis.

Solis first said the driver qualified because the hybrid bus is fuel-efficient. Keith Hall, commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, later clarified that all bus drivers hold green jobs, since they work in mass transit. The administration says jobs are green if they provide services that benefit the environment.

More than 52,000 people have been trained under a green-jobs program paid for by the economic stimulus law, Solis said. Of those who have completed the training, about 52 percent have found jobs, she said.

Republicans countered that many of those trained already had jobs, and that only a small number of formerly unemployed people got jobs that can truly be called green. Construction and automotive jobs "don't sound quite as green," said Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah.

Deputy Energy Secretary Daniel Poneman said solar power and other forms of renewable energy are likely to grow exponentially in the next few decades. The only question is who will benefit, he said, citing studies showing that the United States ranks third in clean energy investments, behind China and Germany.

"We have a choice to make," Poneman told Issa's committee. "We can compete successfully in the global marketplace — creating American jobs and selling American products — or we can resign ourselves to importing more of the technologies of tomorrow from abroad."

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