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General Comment

I am commenting on behalf of A.O. Smith Water Products Company, the largest manufacturer of residential and commercial water heaters in the USA. We are members of the Air-conditioning, Heating, Refrigeration, Institute (AHRI), and support the general and specific comments provided by it. In addition, we wish to reinforce the following points:

- The major issue as we see it is harmonization of appliance certification, testing, and audit policies with other government agencies and programs like ENERGY STAR.
- The current energy rating audit programs for ENERGY STAR and minimum efficiency compliance appear to be separate, and should be combined.
- A common energy descriptor for water heaters in NAECA and EPACT (per S 156 and HR 482 submitted legislation - the AHRI consensus) will streamline and simplify water heater regulations.
- In general, we think the public hearings and comment periods are being conducted in a manner that allows DOE to get a balanced view for decision making. However, as evidenced by the requirements for condensing gas and heat pump water heaters over 55 gallons in the latest final rule on NAECA minimum efficiencies for water heaters, it appears that DOE does not always act in a balanced manner to the views they receive.
- The latest final rule on certification, compliance, and enforcement (with the proliferation of base models and base model groups) flies in the face of streamlining and making regulations less onerous. Also, the fact that a "final" rule was issued on this topic in January, then rescinded, and another

"final" rule was issued in March, is not conducive to minimizing regulatory impact.

- VICP's (voluntary independent certification programs) should be recognized and accepted by DOE to reduce regulatory burden on manufacturers.

We endorse DOE taking steps to comply with the Executive Order to reduce regulatory burdens on manufacturers, distributors, and the installation trades for water heaters.