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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman Chairman, Committee Energy on Commerce Clean Energy Policies That Reduce Our Dependence on Oil Subcommittee on Energy and Environment April 28, 2010

For decades, our nation has faced a seemingly intractable problem: our ever-increasing dependence on oil.

Political leaders from both parties have identified and detailed the danger of our oil dependence and the risks it poses to our economy, our national security, and our environment.

However, as the years passed little progress was made to address the threat. It seemed that each year the amount of oil we imported would go up. Each year the projected need for future imports would also grow.

We seemed resigned to this fate. In the first half of the last decade, the nation got a Republican energy policy. With a Republican Congress, President Bush got more than 95% of the energy policies he wanted. However, even after the Republican policies were adopted, the U.S. was still on a trajectory to need more oil every year – year after year – for as far as we could project into the future.

However, in the last few years, Congress and the Administration have reversed course. We've worked to adopt clean energy policies and are heading in a new direction for our energy security.

We passed the Energy Independence and Security Act. We increased CAFE. We passed the Recovery Act. We've invested in the technology and manufacturing capability to help bring plug-in electric drive vehicles to market beginning this year.

We've helped state and local governments replace their buses, trucks, and work vehicles with natural gas powered vehicles from New York to Texas, from California to Maryland.

Today's hearing will explore some of the real actions we've taken to cut our nation's dependence on oil.

We welcome EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson to the Committee. She will testify regarding clean energy policies that are being implemented today by the EPA that are reducing our dependence on oil.

Earlier this month, EPA finalized an historic rule establishing greenhouse gas tailpipe standards for cars and trucks. EPA has produced strong but workable standards for tailpipe emissions, harmonized with the standards from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

These standards will cut our oil dependence by 1.8 billion barrels of oil, drive the development of new technology here in the U.S., and provide the U.S. auto industry with the certainty it desires. These standards do all this while saving consumers \$3,000 over the life of a vehicle. The auto companies, auto workers, states and environmentalists are all on board.

These policies are already making a difference for our nation's future. For the first time in decades, the Energy Information Administration no longer projects that the U.S. need for oil will increase year after year. We now expect that the U.S. will not need any more oil in 2030 than it did in 2007. This is a remarkable improvement for our energy security.

There is still more work to do. Administrator Jackson will brief us on an important new EPA study that reveals the dramatic oil savings that are technically feasible and can be achieved through new energy policies.

But the good news is that as we begin to solve the seemingly intractable problem of oil dependence, we also make progress on another seemingly intractable problem – the dangerous increase in our carbon pollution.

This is what we are standing for: strong, pragmatic, and effective policies that face the threats to our country and find sensible ways to resolve them. As a result, we are, in fact, reducing our reliance on oil and our emissions of pollution while saving consumers money. We are encouraging a decisive shift towards the clean energy technologies that will run the economies of the future.

Before I close, I'd also like to welcome Fred Smith of Fedex, Jason Wolf of Better Place, Robert Diamond of the Truman Security Project, and Charles Drevna of the National Petrochemical Refiners Association who will be testifying on our second panel.

We have made real strides towards improving our energy security over the past year or so. Today, we will learn more about how comprehensive clean energy legislation can help us to take the next steps.