

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927  
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April 12, 2012

The Honorable Fred Upton  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ed Whitfield  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Energy and Power  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Upton and Chairman Whitfield:

We are writing to urge you to hold a hearing on the unprecedented heat wave the United States experienced in March and the role global climate change played in this extreme weather event.

On March 23, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) released its annual statement on the global climate, concluding that the global temperature increase rate has been “remarkable” during the last four decades.<sup>1</sup> The recent heat wave has been remarkable as well, both in its duration as well as its intensity.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), more than 15,000 warm temperature records were set last month as the contiguous United States experienced the warmest March on record.<sup>2</sup> The average monthly temperature was 8.6° above

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<sup>1</sup> World Meteorological Organization, *WMO annual statement confirms 2011 as 11th warmest on record* (Mar. 23, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Climatic Data Center, *State of the Climate: March 2012* (online at [www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/](http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/)) (accessed Apr. 9, 2012).

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normal, a departure exceeded only once since record-keeping began more than a century ago.<sup>3</sup> The unusually warm March helped make the first three months of 2012 the warmest on record for the contiguous United States.<sup>4</sup>

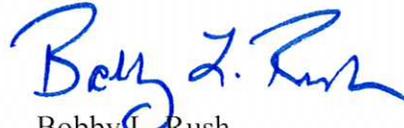
In Chicago, temperatures broke or matched records for daily highs nine days in a row in March and reached 80° eight times.<sup>5</sup> One meteorologist called this weather “unbelievable and historic and unprecedented.”<sup>6</sup> In International Falls, Minnesota, the low temperature of 60° on March 19 matched the previous record high for that date.<sup>7</sup> Mike Halpert, deputy director of NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center, said it was “just mind-boggling” that daily low temperatures could reach previous record highs.<sup>8</sup> In fact, NOAA recorded 21 instances in March in which the nighttime temperatures were as warm as or warmer than the existing record daytime temperature for that day.<sup>9</sup>

While this weather may feel pleasant, it spells trouble for our climate. Congress must examine what this March heat wave and other recent weather extremes tell us about our changing climate. We urge you to schedule a hearing as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman  
Ranking Member



Bobby L. Rush  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Energy and Power

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<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> National Weather Service Chicago, *A Historic Stretch of Daily Temperatures Records this March* (Mar. 24, 2012) (public information statement); *One for the record books: Warmest March ever*, Chicago Tribune (Mar. 30, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> *One for the record books: Warmest March ever*, Chicago Tribune (Mar. 30, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> National Weather Service Forecast Office, Duluth, MN, *Monthly March Temperature Records* (online at [www.crh.noaa.gov/dlh/?n=march2012](http://www.crh.noaa.gov/dlh/?n=march2012)) (accessed Apr. 9, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> “Mind-boggling” temperatures across U.S. says NOAA, ClimateSignals (Mar. 22, 2012) (online at <http://climatesignals.org/2012/03/mind-boggling-temperatures-across-u-s-says/>).

<sup>9</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Climatic Data Center, *State of the Climate: March 2012* (online at [www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/](http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/)) (accessed Apr. 9, 2012).