

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

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July 13, 2012

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

The Honorable Ed Whitfield
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Upton and Chairman Whitfield:

We are writing for the fifteenth time to urge you to hold a hearing on the dangers of climate change. Specifically, we request that you hold a hearing on the recent wildfires and extreme weather events the United States has experienced and the role global climate change played in these events.

On April 6, 2011, every Republican member of the Committee voted that climate change is not occurring.¹ Many Republican members explained their position by arguing that “the science is not settled”² and that “anthropogenic global warming is still an issue that the scientists are still debating.”³

¹ U.S. House of Representatives, Roll Call Vote on Agreeing to H. Amdt. 245 to H.R. 910 (Apr. 6, 2011) (184 yeas, 240 nays).

² Statement of Chairman Emeritus Joe Barton, *Markup on H.R. 910, The Energy Tax Prevention Act of 2011*, Committee on Energy and Commerce, 112th Cong. (Mar. 15, 2011).

³ Statement of Rep. David McKinley, *H.R. , The Energy Tax Prevention Act of 2011*, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Energy and Power, Committee on Energy and Commerce, 112th Cong. (Feb. 9, 2011).

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Since that time, we have written you fourteen times to request hearings on the science of climate change. Our premise was that if you and other Republican members had genuine doubts about the strength of the science, you would welcome hearings at which Committee members could hear testimony from the nation's leading experts. Yet you have not responded to any of our letters.

In April, we wrote to request a hearing on the unprecedented heat wave that the nation experienced in March.⁴ More than 15,000 warm temperature records were set that month as the contiguous United States experienced the warmest March on record.⁵ Previously, we wrote to request hearings on other important climate change topics, including major reports from the National Academy of Sciences, the Vatican, the Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature Project, the International Energy Agency, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. These requests all went unanswered.

Willful ignorance of the science is irresponsible and it is dangerous. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the United States has set more than 40,000 hot temperature records this year.⁶ Just this week, NOAA reported that the last 12 months have been the hottest in U.S. history.⁷

At the end of June, more than 113 million people in the U.S. were in areas under extreme heat advisories.⁸ Two-thirds of the country is experiencing drought.⁹ Kentucky is facing a

⁴ Letter from Reps. Henry A. Waxman and Bobby L. Rush to Rep. Fred Upton and Ed Whitfield (Apr. 12, 2012) (online at <http://democrats.energycommerce.house.gov/index.php?q=news/ranking-members-waxman-and-rush-call-for-hearing-on-role-of-global-climate-change-in-march-heat>).

⁵ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Climatic Data Center, *State of the Climate: March 2012* (online at www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/).

⁶ Associated Press, *Summer Is 'What Global Warming Looks Like'* (June 30, 2012) (online at <http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,2118697,00.html#ixzz1zrO7YSZV>).

⁷ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Climatic Data Center, *State of the Climate: June 2012* (<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/national/2012/6>).

⁸ Associated Press, *Summer Is 'What Global Warming Looks Like'* (June 30, 2012) (online at <http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,2118697,00.html#ixzz1zrO7YSZV>).

⁹ Associated Press, *Summer Is 'What Global Warming Looks Like'* (June 30, 2012) (online at <http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,2118697,00.html#ixzz1zrO7YSZV>).

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historic drought that is threatening the state's crop yields.¹⁰ Other states facing severe losses of corn and other crops due to drought include Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Ohio.¹¹

More than 2.1 million acres have burned in wildfires this year.¹² In 2011, Texas had the most fires in recorded history.¹³ This summer, Colorado has been fighting the state's most destructive wildfires ever. According to the *Washington Post*, "Lightning and suspected arson ignited them . . . , but scientists and federal officials say the table was set by a culprit that will probably contribute to bigger and more frequent wildfires for years to come: climate change."¹⁴

In other parts of the country, intense storms are wreaking havoc. Two weeks ago, a freak derecho caused over a million homes to lose power in the Washington, D.C. region.¹⁵ Last month, Florida was inundated by days of downpours.¹⁶ Also last month, Duluth, Minnesota, suffered its most damaging flood in history due to torrential rains.¹⁷

Scientists are increasingly saying that these events are the climate change consequences they have been anticipating. Jonathan Overpeck of the University of Arizona stated, "The extra heat increases the odds of worse heat waves, droughts, storms and wildfire. This is certainly what I and many other climate scientists have been warning about."¹⁸ Kevin Trenberth of the National Center for Atmospheric Research commented that these are the record-breaking

¹⁰ Courier-Journal, *Blistering drought threatens Kentucky crops* (June 29, 2012) (online at http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2012306290100&nclick_check=1).

¹¹ Wall Street Journal, *Corn Prices Soar as Midwest Bakes* (July 10, 2012) (online at http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303292204577517181109756756.html?mod=googlenews_wsj).

¹² Washington Post, *Table was set for monster fire in Colorado* (July 1, 2012) (online at http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/colorados-table-was-set-for-monster-fire/2012/07/01/gJQAVa6cGW_story.html).

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Washington Post, *Derecho: Behind Washington, D.C.'s destructive thunderstorm outbreak, June 29, 2012* (June 30, 2012) (online http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/capital-weather-gang/post/derecho-behind-washington-dcs-destructive-thunderstorm-outbreak-june-29-2012/2012/06/30/gJQA22O7DW_blog.html).

¹⁶ Associated Press, *Climate Scientists point to U.S. events* (July 3, 2012).

¹⁷ MPR News, *Did climate change "juice" Duluth flood? Runoff "cloud" visible from space* (June 21, 2012) (online at http://minnesota.publicradio.org/collections/special/columns/updraft/archive/2012/06/did_climate_change_juice_dulut.shtml).

¹⁸ Associated Press, *Summer Is 'What Global Warming Looks Like'* (June 30, 2012) (online at <http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,2118697,00.html#ixzz1zrO7YSZV>).

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conditions he has said would happen.¹⁹ Chris Field of the Carnegie Institution and Stanford University said, "It's really dramatic how many of the patterns that we've talked about as the expression of the extremes are hitting the U.S. right now."²⁰ Michael Oppenheimer of Princeton University stated, "What we're seeing really is a window into what global warming really looks like. ... It looks like heat. It looks like fires. It looks like this kind of environmental disasters."²¹

Climate change is a grave threat facing our nation and the world, yet you refuse to hold hearings and the Republican-controlled House votes repeatedly to block action to address climate change. In total, the House has voted 37 times this year to overturn EPA's scientific findings that climate change endangers health and the environment, to stop regulations to reduce carbon emissions, to prevent the United States from participating in international negotiations, and even to cut funding for basic climate science.²² This is a shameful record.

Congress cannot legislate responsibly if we do not listen to the experts and do not know what the consequences of our votes will be. That is why hearings are essential and why we are once again asking that the Committee hold them.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member



Bobby L. Rush
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Power

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² Committee on Energy and Commerce, Minority Staff, U.S. House of Representatives, *The Anti-Environment Record of the U.S. House of Representatives, 112th Congress* (June 18, 2012) (online at http://democrats.energycommerce.house.gov/sites/default/files/image_uploads/Report_AntiEnv_06.18.12.pdf).