

**Remarks of Rep. Henry A. Waxman  
Center for American Progress  
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Thank you, John, very much for that kind introduction. I'm delighted to be with you and your colleagues here at the Center for American Progress. And I want to salute all of the outstanding work that you do.

This morning, I want to speak to you as bluntly as possible.

During my career in Congress, protecting health and the environment has always been my top priority. And during those years, I have been in many battles.

I fought President Reagan's efforts to roll back the Clean Air Act in the 1980s, and then went on to pass landmark 1990 Clean Air Act provisions over the opposition of many industries, until we were able to work out a bipartisan consensus.

I battled efforts by Vice President Dan Quayle and his Council on Competitiveness ... Tom DeLay and the K Street Project ... and President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney's efforts to roll back the law on the environment.

But I've never been in a Congress where there was such an overwhelming disconnect between science and public policy.

The Republicans in Congress have become the party of science deniers and that is profoundly dangerous.

Exhibit A in the Republican attack on science is the Upton-Inhofe bill that overturns EPA's scientific determination that carbon emissions endanger health and welfare. When we had a hearing on this legislation last month, Senator Inhofe was the lead witness. He told us that climate change is a "hoax."

The new Republican majority in the House has a lot of power to write our nation's laws, but they do not have the power to rewrite the laws of nature.

Republicans in Congress can't cure cancer by passing a bill that declares smoking safe.

And they can't stop climate change by declaring it a hoax.

Overturning EPA's endangerment finding and stripping EPA of regulatory authority won't stop carbon pollution from building up in the atmosphere. It won't stop the droughts and floods that are ravishing nations across the globe. It won't protect the air quality of our cities when summer temperatures soar to record levels. And it won't stop the strange weather patterns that locked much of our nation in a deep freeze this winter.

The Republican rejection of science is also visible in H.R. 1, the Continuing Resolution. The CR is a reckless assault on our health and the environmental laws. Provision after provision strips back protections for air, water, and public lands.

They do this by slashing the funding of EPA by almost one-third. EPA and the states will have neither the authority nor the resources to carry out the Clean Air Act, ensure safe drinking water, protect rivers and lakes, or clean up hazardous waste contamination.

But that's not all.

When the legislation hit the floor, Republicans adopted amendment after amendment – saying no funds could be used because they couldn't change the law – but they could say that no funds could be used to do a lot of important things like:

- Requiring cement kilns clean up their toxic mercury emissions which damage the way our children think and learn;
- They barred the Environmental Appeals Board from considering the impacts of air pollution from oil and gas drilling along the Arctic coast;
- They defunded efforts to protect water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and in Florida;
- They eviscerated protections against the worst mining practices;
- They prevented regulation of toxic coal ash; and
- They blocked the funding to set air quality standards to protect against life-threatening air pollution.

With a direct attack on federal efforts to understand and prevent climate change, it defunded EPA's efforts to reduce carbon emissions. They even prohibited the United States from supporting the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the leading international scientific body studying climate change.

This prompted *The New York Times* to write an editorial yesterday entitled: "On Climate, Who Needs the Facts?"

It apparently no longer matters in Congress what health experts and scientists think. All that seems to matter is what Koch Industries thinks.

In my remarks today, I want to cover three topics with you: I want to describe the disconnect between science and political belief that is so prevalent in Congress today; I want to share some thoughts about the forces behind this disconnect; and I want to want to talk about what we can do about it.

## **Science Denial**

The growing gulf between evidence and fact, on the one hand, and political positions and beliefs, on the other, is not limited to environmental policy.

There is a consensus among economists that federal spending under the Recovery Act saved millions of jobs and pulled our economy back from the brink of a depression. But during the campaign in November, Republicans ran on the platform that the economic stimulus undermined our economy and destroyed jobs.

In the current debate over the CR, Republicans claim that slashing federal spending will create jobs and grow the economy. But the consensus of economists and market analysts is exactly the opposite: enacting the cuts the Republicans have proposed will cost hundreds of thousands of jobs.

One of the sharpest manifestations of the disconnect between reality and rhetoric, however, is in the area of climate change.

Every year, the scientific evidence on climate change grows stronger.

Last year, our National Academy of Sciences, our premier scientific organization, reported that climate change is real and it's a serious threat. The Academy found: "Climate change is occurring, is caused largely by human activities, and poses significant risks for – and in many cases is already affecting – a broad range of human and natural systems."

This is the same conclusion reached by the premier scientific organizations of all the world's major economies.

The findings that they all come to is that the impacts are beginning to be felt. Last year was the hottest and wettest on record. Floods in the United States killed dozens of people in Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Even bigger floods submerged much of Pakistan and Australia.

Other regions of the world experienced droughts. The droughts in Russia and China are one of the main factors driving food prices to records levels.

The reaction of many on the Republican side has been to deny the science. This is politically convenient because if you reject the science, the imperative to act vanishes. But it is incredibly irresponsible.

The *New York Times Magazine* reported last week that half the Republicans in the House and three-quarters of the Republican senators believe climate change is exaggerated or a hoax. Those are staggering numbers.

There is an overwhelming scientific consensus that climate change is real and a serious danger, yet most Republicans in Congress reject this consensus.

Rep. Joe Barton was the ranking member of the Energy and Commerce Committee when I was chairman, and I approached him about working together to produce a bill that would be bipartisan. He said, "I don't not believe in the science. So why would I want to work with you to solve a problem that I don't think exists?"

This year, the chair of our Environment Subcommittee is Rep. John Shimkus. He is also a science denier. He says he doesn't believe in climate change because "God said the earth would not be destroyed after the flood of Noah."

A key question is what our new Chairman Fred Upton thinks. In 2009, when we were debating the energy bill, he agreed that climate change is "a serious problem that necessitates serious solutions." But earlier this year, he told a reporter that he did not believe humans have a role in causing climate change.

So the gulf between what science tells us and what the governing party in the House believes makes it difficult to find common ground. When the members on the other side of the aisle dispute the science and deny that climate change is a problem, how do you start a conversation about solutions? They say there is no problem, so we don't need to reduce emissions ... we don't need to set clean energy standards ... and we don't need to invest in new technologies.

### **Partisanship**

A common perception is that energy and environmental issues are more regional than partisan. For most of my career that has been true.

But this is no longer true today. The Republican Party is increasingly the anti-environment party, and I believe that is one of the root causes of the rejection of science.

During the debates over the 1990 Clean Air Act, there were both Democratic and Republican environmental champions.

President George H. W. Bush campaigned on strengthening the Clean Air Act. Republican Rep. Jerry Lewis from California was a close ally of mine on the provisions to reduce smog and control vehicle emissions. Republican Rep. Sherry Boehlert from New York was a close ally on the provisions to reduce acid rain because of the impacts on New England. And Republican Rep. Ed Madigan from Illinois was a close ally on the provisions to reformulate gasoline because of the potential market for renewable fuels.

Our major obstacle in those fights was not partisan politics; it was U.S. industry. The car companies said they could not meet the new tailpipe standards ... the chemical industry said they could not meet the new toxics standards and that the provisions to eliminate ozone-destroying CFCs would shut down office buildings and hospitals ... the oil industry said they could not make cleaner-burning gasoline ... and the electric utilities said the acid rain provisions would cause electricity rates to skyrocket.

Ultimately, we were able to forge bipartisan regional coalitions and enact a law in 1990 that was stronger than the leading environmental bills from the previous Congress.

And once the law was enacted, industry found ways to meet the new standards at minimal cost. The sky didn't fall like industry predicted; instead, it got a lot cleaner.

The debate last Congress over clean energy and climate legislation was fundamentally different. On the Democratic side, regional differences still mattered. Rep. Ed Markey and I needed to forge compromises with coal state members like Rick Boucher, oil state members like Gene Green, and members representing industrial states like Mike Doyle of Pennsylvania.

But industry and Republican members approached the issue in new, but completely divergent, ways.

The new industry approach was a welcomed change. They wanted a clear direction for the nation. They told Congress that they could achieve aggressive goals as long as the policies were well structured. And they could put a lot of people to work doing it.

What was motivating support from business was the desire, after years of debate, for certainty about the way forward. The U.S. Climate Action Partnership was formed by CEOs from business and environmental organizations. They acknowledged that global warming must be addressed and issued a call to action, proclaiming:

Each year we delay action to control emissions increases the risk of unavoidable consequences that could necessitate even steeper reductions in the future, at potentially greater economic cost and social disruption.

And they recommended "the prompt enactment of national legislation in the United States to slow, stop and reverse the growth of greenhouse gas emissions over the shortest period of time reasonably achievable."

Well, that was a remarkable change. It wasn't easy, but we entered into a process with industry stakeholders and we forged a comprehensive energy and climate policy.

As a result, we had a remarkable coalition urging passage when the American Clean Energy and Security Act came to the House floor. Unlike our previous fights on the environment, we had a bill that was endorsed by energy companies and utilities, including Duke, Exelon, Shell, and PG&E. We had support across the manufacturing sector, including GE, General Motors, Dow Chemical, Corning, and Rio Tinto. And major agriculture interests were on board, including the National Farmers Union, the American Corn Growers, and the National Association of Wheat Growers.

What proved fatal to the bill was that in the Senate there was a Republican reaction. Despite the support of the legislation from industry, which Republicans used to pay attention to, Republicans in both the House and in the Senate made a decision to turn the energy bill into a partisan battleground.

Our legislation was modeled on the successful cap-and-trade approach used in the 1990 Clean Air Act to control acid rain.

This was an approach that President George H.W. Bush and other Republicans had championed as a market-based way to achieve environmental results.

But even though we were using a Republican idea as our cornerstone and had industry support, no Republicans in the Senate would support the bill.

As a matter of strategy, the Republican efforts to demonize our bill may have made political sense. But it set back our efforts to address climate change and achieve energy independence by many years.

Protection of the environment is now a partisan battleground.

On the preeminent environmental threat of our time – climate change – we can't even agree whether there is a problem.

### **Special Interests**

Another force contributing to the emergence of science denial is the growing power of some special interests. And that is also changing the nature of our politics.

Special interests have always been part of the political landscape.

But our campaign finance laws always placed limits on the extent of their influence. But now, as a result of the Supreme Court decision, a company like Koch Industries could pour millions of dollars into electing legislators who agree with their agenda.

An insightful article was written last October in the *New York Times* by John Broder about the Tea Party and climate change. He reported that “skepticism and outright denial of global warming are among the articles of faith of the Tea Party movement.” He quoted one Tea Party leader who called climate change “a flat-out lie.”

Another movement leader said: “Some people say I'm extreme, but they said the John Birch Society was extreme too.”

The article described how fossil fuel industries provided backing to the Tea Party movement and encouraged them to adopt these anti-science views. Again, money seems to have a lot to say about these views. Americans for Prosperity, an organization closely linked to Koch Industries, played a leading role in these efforts. They say, here's some money, we're against government, we want freedom to do whatever we want, we don't want government regulation, we don't want those people telling us how to behave, and we don't want them telling us that science is on their side. We are against them. It's a hoax.

The result in this last election was the addition of new members with extreme views that reject the consensus of our top scientists.

## Next Steps

Science denial, partisanship, and the rising power of special interests are deeply intertwined, and they feed off of each other. Koch Industries benefits immensely from the rollback of EPA regulations, so it backs Republican candidates who advocate this position. And it funds groups that attack the science and organizes anti-regulation demonstrations. Republican strategists see a partisan advantage in attacking efforts to address climate change, so that leads to a growing acceptance of science denial.

This is not a happy political reality, but it is one we need to face and figure out how to change.

I want to offer three suggestions for a path forward.

First, we need to preserve the Administration's existing authorities. While Congress has been debating what to do, President Obama and his Administration have been taking important steps administratively and pursuit to the Recovery Act legislation.

As a result of the Administration's leadership, vehicles will be cleaner and more fuel-efficient than ever. This has eased our projected need for oil and oil imports. Even if we were to take no more action, we'll need no more oil in 2030 than we needed in 2007. This new reality turns the old debate about the need for relaxed environmental requirements and new oil refineries on its head.

And as a result, we're seeing plug-in electric drive vehicles are being domestically mass manufactured for the first time.

Advanced battery manufacturing – a sector which Asia had solely dominated for years – has begun in the U.S.

And we have established robust policies to encourage renewable energy projects and energy efficiency efforts.

Congress is not likely to enact a new energy policy this year or next. That means that whatever progress will be made needs to come from the Obama Administration. We need to encourage the Administration, the President Obama and his cabinet, to take full advantage of their existing authorities and make sure they are not reversed in Congress.

And, of course, that includes protecting the Environmental Protection Agency.

Second, we need to educate the public about what is happening in Washington.

It is a Republican mantra that they are pursuing the “will of the people.” But that's not what they are doing. Their anti-science, anti-environment agenda may be the will of oil companies, but it is not what American families want.

The Republican leadership in Congress is overreaching. And we need to take full advantage of that fact. An informed public is our best weapon for advancing clean energy and reasonable regulatory policies.

We need to tell the American people that not only is climate change at stake but as well, clean and safe food, pharmaceuticals, and devices that are effective—all the places where they look to government to regulate; it needs to be strengthened and not stripped.

And finally, we need to find a way to work together across party lines to address climate change and our dependence on foreign oil.

And you might think, at this point, that that's going to be impossible. Well, neither Democrats nor Republicans can solve these problems by themselves. We need to find a way to forge a consensus. And that takes time. I know as I've worked on many bills over the years, it took time to develop legislation to confront HIV-AIDS. It took a lot of time to get legislation to regulate tobacco at the FDA. It took time to do a lot of other things, like the Clean Air Act provisions of 1990.

I remember when we were looking at the tobacco industry. We had the science so clear but the tobacco industry was still denying the science. Leaving people in doubt, as we are now seeing in climate change, and leading some people to think, perhaps, that the science wasn't all that settled. The costs of delay on tobacco policy were enormous because millions of people became hooked on tobacco and died.

What alarms me about climate change is that we don't have decades to wait.

We don't have decades to wait because our international competitors know that economic success in this century depends on winning the race to develop clean energy technologies. The Chinese have been investing over \$2 billion each week in renewable and other green technologies.

They have become the world's largest manufacturer of solar panels and wind turbines.

Europe is racing ahead of us in reducing carbon emissions and developing advances in solar energy and green buildings.

If we don't act soon, we will lose these markets and the jobs they create to China and other countries.

Now Congress and the American people need to be educated about the science. But they also need to learn about the economic disadvantages to us as a nation if we don't seize the initiative.

Last Congress, this is exactly the message we heard from CEOs from our nation's leading companies. Companies like General Electric and Duke Energy told us that billions of dollars in

private capital have been frozen because the United States does not have a long-term plan for reducing carbon emissions.

I remember after the election one of my colleagues that lost said we should never have been dealing with climate change because what people wanted back home were jobs. There was a complete disconnect between the jobs that would be created if we took the action to deal with the climate change problem.

Now that's the affirmative economic argument for acting. But there are other costs of inaction, and they could be even more profound.

Our weather is getting more extreme and more dangerous every year. Droughts are affecting the world food supply. Floods in Pakistan and other countries have displaced millions.

In the West, many of our forests are dying. And scientists warn of "tipping points" that could be impossible to reverse.

This is why I keep coming back to the science. If the scientists are right, we are facing a problem that we cannot avoid. We cannot delay actions and we cannot strip EPA of its authority. We cannot hope that this problem will go away.

In fact, we know that doing nothing will only make these problems worse. We know that carbon emissions remain in the atmosphere for hundreds of years and more. That means that delay today will mean far deeper and more costly reductions tomorrow.

Speaking of tomorrow, this Tuesday, we are having an important hearing in our Committee, the Energy and Commerce Committee. Democrats on the Energy and Commerce Committee used our right under the rules to insist on a hearing on climate science. To their credit, Chairman Upton and Subcommittee Chairman Whitfield scheduled the hearing for tomorrow. We have invited four leading climate scientists to testify. We didn't think that Senator Inhofe should be the only person to talk to our committee about science before we passed legislation.

What I'm going to tell my Republican colleagues, what we must continue to do, is that I am not wedded to the language in last year's energy bill; that I am willing to work with them on new approaches and creative ideas. We can start from a blank piece of paper.

There are many ways to make progress on climate change. We can invest in research and development of new clean energy technologies ... we can promote energy efficiency ... we can set a clean energy standard and build a smart grid ... and we can set a price on carbon.

I have my own views on all these issues. I think the bill the House passed last year is the most effective approach. But I also know that we need to find a way to work across party lines, and I will tell my republican counterparts that I will work with them on other approaches if this can bring us together.

I am hopeful, as I was on all those other issues where we ran into a wall that seemed impossible to overcome, that we will start to work together. We need to be working side-by-side on a bipartisan basis, and not give up hope that that can happen.

### **Conclusion**

I want to conclude with some brief reflections on historical context.

Climate change is an environmental issue. It is an economic issue. But it is also fundamentally a moral issue.

We have an opportunity to act now to forestall great harm to our nation and to the world.

We had that kind of issue in other times in our history. We had it during the civil rights debate, where leaders like Mike Mansfield and Everett Dirksen stood up and said: this is an issue that will not go away; it must be resolved; the time has come. And I think climate change is such an issue.

If we don't act on this challenge, we will not meet our moral obligations to our children and future generations. And history will not judge us kindly.

Our path forward may look forbidding, and our journey may be longer than we hoped last Congress. But let us keep in mind the moral imperative to act, the economic imperative to act, the environmental imperative to act, and not turn aside. We've got to keep pushing, we've got to keep working, and we will overcome. I just hope that it won't take so many years that we will find that we'll be putting more money into adaptation to deal with the harm from climate change than in developing technology that will allow us to deal with this problem.

Thank you very much.