

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS
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House of Representatives
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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
“Climate Science and EPA's Greenhouse Gas Regulations”
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
March 8, 2011

Today's hearing is a crucial opportunity for this Committee to understand what is at stake before it considers legislation to block action on climate change.

Our health and lives, our economic strength, our national security – all are threatened by climate change. As we will hear today from some of the world's leading experts, human-induced climate change is happening, we are already seeing its effects, and harm from climate change is growing.

Members of Congress have the responsibility to consider the threats facing the nation and make careful choices about how to address them. We owe that to our constituents and to future generations. I am disappointed that this hearing is happening only because Committee Democrats insisted on it. But I commend the majority for agreeing to our request. We now have the opportunity to hear the scientists explain the scope and magnitude of harm from climate change.

I hope the members of this Committee are willing to listen.

The Upton-Inhofe bill would overturn EPA's scientific finding that greenhouse gas emissions endanger health and the environment. That determination was based on the science we will hear about today. The Upton-Inhofe bill would also remove EPA's authority to protect the American public from carbon pollution and the impacts of climate change. The bill would legislate a scientific finding out of existence, and it would remove the Administration's main tools to address one of the most critical problems facing the world today.

The premise of this radical legislation, as stated by its lead Senate sponsor, is that climate change is a hoax. So before we act on the legislation, the members of this Committee must decide: Do we act based on the personal opinion of Senator Inhofe? Or do we accept the vast body of scientific understanding, based on multiple lines of evidence, across multiple scientific disciplines, which says that climate change is real and dangerous?

None of us would hesitate in our own lives. If my doctor told me I had cancer, I wouldn't scour the country to find someone to tell me that I don't need to worry about it. Just because I didn't feel gravely ill yet, I wouldn't assume that my doctor was falsifying the data. And if my doctor said he didn't know how long I had to live, I wouldn't say, well, if he's uncertain about that, he's probably wrong about the whole thing. I would try to get a second opinion from the best expert I could find about the diagnosis. But I would never call the findings of the medical experts a "hoax."

Most of us don't substitute our own judgment for that of experts when it comes to medicine . . . nuclear engineering . . . building bridges . . . or designing computer security. The experts on climate change include atmospheric chemists and physicists, meteorologists, biologists, statisticians, computer scientists, paleontologists, and geologists – thousands of highly trained professionals who have published tens of thousands of research papers in the world's top scientific peer-reviewed journals.

To reject that body of research and expertise is breathtakingly irresponsible.

Chairman Upton and Chairman Whitfield, I am not wedded to the language in last year's energy bill. I am willing to work with you on new approaches and creative ideas. We can start from a blank piece of paper.

I am prepared to meet with you without any preconditions – and for as long as it takes – to find a basis for common ground.

But we need to find a way to work across party lines to address this threat to our health, our economic prosperity, and our national security.

We have an opportunity to act now to forestall great harm to our nation and our world. If we don't address this challenge, we will not meet our moral obligation to our children and the future.

And history will not judge us kindly.