

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on “The American Energy Initiative - Federal government perspectives regarding
alternative fuels and vehicles”
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
July 17, 2012

Today this subcommittee is holding its 26th day of hearings on “The American Energy Initiative.” And what we will hear from the majority will be as disconnected from reality as what we have heard in the 25 previous hearings. For 18 months, the Republicans have tried to talk about energy policy without even mentioning, let alone addressing, the problem of carbon pollution and climate change.

Climate change is inextricably linked to our energy choices. And sound energy policy is critical to strengthening our energy security, boosting our economy, improving our international competitiveness, growing jobs, reducing pollution, and protecting public health. We must tackle climate change and our other energy challenges together, or we will inevitably fail to achieve these goals.

The Republicans’ approach is like trying to make America more secure without acknowledging the threat of terrorism. It is like trying to improve our international competitiveness while pretending China doesn’t exist. It is doomed to failure.

And that failure has a very high price.

We’re now starting to get a clearer picture of the costs of unchecked climate change. The recent wildfires, drought, heat waves, and extreme weather events are exactly the types of extreme events that scientists have been predicting ... and that this Committee has been ignoring.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, more than 40,000 hot temperature records have been set this year. The past 12 months were the warmest 12 month period ever recorded in the U.S.

At the end of June, more than 100 million people in the U.S. were in areas under extreme heat advisories. Two-thirds of the country is experiencing drought. And last week, the

Agriculture Department declared a federal disaster area in more than 1,000 counties covering 26 states, making it the largest disaster declaration ever made by USDA. More than 2 million acres have burned in wildfires this year.

A recent study by NOAA and the U.K. Hadley Center found that due to climate change, the odds that Texas will experience an extreme heat wave like it did last summer are now 20 times higher, compared to the 1960s. According to economists at the Texas Agrilife Extension Service, last summer's drought cost Texas agriculture \$7.6 billion. That's just a portion of the costs of one extreme event that was made far more likely by climate change.

But instead of tackling the problem, the Republicans have refused to acknowledge it. Rep. Rush and I have written to Chairman Upton and Chairman Whitfield fifteen times this year to request hearings on various climate change reports and topics. We have yet to get a response.

And the Republicans have done worse than just ignore climate change. They are actually pushing policies that would make it worse. The House Republicans have voted 81 times on the House floor to block action to address climate change and establish clean energy policies.

The Republicans have even voted to block the EPA carbon pollution tailpipe standards, which we will hear about today. As proposed, those standards will save consumers on average \$4,400 at the pump, net of vehicle costs, as well as reduce carbon pollution by 2 billion metric tons and save about 4 billion barrels of oil.

Only an extreme ideology could view these standards as a bad idea that Congress needs to stop.

Mr. Chairman, twenty-six hearings in this subcommittee and we continue to ignore the real and urgent problem of climate change. As Americans across this country continue to experience devastating extreme events, which are becoming more frequent as the earth warms, it is increasingly clear that we don't have any more time to waste.