

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on “The American Energy Initiative – EPA Greenhouse Gas Regulations”
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
June 19, 2012

Today’s hearing is no surprise, but it is deeply disappointing.

The Republican majority is holding yet another hearing to condemn EPA action to reduce carbon pollution. Eighteen months into this Congress, the majority still denies the threat posed by climate change – and recklessly rejects considering any actions to address one of the gravest dangers facing the world today.

When it comes to climate change, the Republicans have given new meaning to the phrase “Just Say No.”

Congressman Rush and I have written over ten times to Chairman Upton and Chairman Whitfield urging them to hold hearings on new scientific findings about climate change.

The Chairmen have said no to hearings on the harm climate change poses to crop yields and the effects of ocean acidification. They have said no to hearings on the threat from methane releases and the shrinking time left for action.

They have said no to hearings on climate change reports issued by the International Energy Agency, the National Academy of Sciences, and the Vatican.

Instead of examining the science, House Republicans have voted that climate change does not exist. And they have voted 37 times on the House floor this Congress to block efforts to prevent climate change.

The Republicans have also said no to clean energy, which would grow jobs and the economy. They have voted 45 times on the House floor to block investments in clean energy and energy efficiency. The Republicans have voted against cleaner vehicles that save consumers money at the pump and reduce America’s dependence on oil. They have even voted against

better incandescent light bulbs that produce exactly the same light with less energy and lower overall cost.

The House Republicans are trying to deny the laws of nature. They have voted to reject the most basic facts and scientific findings. They deny basic physics, which finds that greenhouse gases trap heat. They deny decades of measurements showing steadily rising quantities of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. They reject cutting-edge satellite readings showing rising temperatures. And they say they know more than the very best scientists at the preeminent scientific body in our nation, the National Academies.

Just last week, we learned that the Republican legislators in North Carolina are moving a bill that forbids use of projected rates of sea level rise that are any higher than historical rates, for the purposes of state planning. Can you imagine that? They are jeopardizing homes along their coast because accepting reality would conflict with their political ideology.

The Republican Party has a choice. It can continue down the path of science denial and continue to pass bills declaring that the sea won't rise. Or it can stop denying the science and start grappling with how to respond to climate change.

We may have legitimate disagreements about the best response. But science denial is indefensible over the short-term and unsustainable over the long-term. Already, decades of inaction have locked in more warming and higher costs to respond. The longer we wait to say "yes, we will act," the higher the price will be.

The price of this denial will be paid by the American entrepreneurs, workers, and communities that want to participate in the clean energy economy of the future. It will be paid by the small towns and large cities that face billions of dollars of infrastructure costs from seas that don't heed legislative commands. It will be paid by farmers with less productive crops, and communities struggling with persistent droughts and raging wildfires. It will be paid by over a million species of animals and plants that may go extinct.

The price of this denial will be paid by many generations to come, starting with our own children and grandchildren. This is worse than disappointing. It is shameful.