

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS  
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**Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman**  
**Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Hearing on “The American Energy Initiative: A Focus on Alternative Fuels and Vehicles,**  
**Both the Challenges and the Opportunities”**  
**Subcommittee on Energy and Power**  
**July 10, 2012**

Today, the Subcommittee examines the opportunities and challenges associated with alternative fuels and vehicles. This topic is important for the nation’s environmental and economic health and our national security.

Just a few years ago, nearly 60% of U.S. transportation fuels came from abroad. And projections were discouraging. Experts predicted higher oil consumption and more imports far into the future. Carbon pollution from the transportation sector was expected to grow and grow and grow.

Under the leadership of President Obama, we have reversed this trend in a historic and fundamental shift. In April 2010, the Administration finalized fuel efficiency and carbon pollution standards for model year 2012-2016 cars and trucks. These standards will save consumers, on average, more than \$3,000 in fuel costs over the life of a new vehicle. This is the net savings, after accounting for any increased vehicle cost. This is a good example of government intervention that has been very successful.

In November 2011, the Obama Administration proposed to expand this successful program to include model years 2017-2025. The benefits of this program to the nation are profound. Families will save \$8,000 in fuel costs over the life of a new vehicle. These savings will accumulate and consumers as a group will save \$1.7 trillion over the life of the program.

These standards will save 2.2 million barrels of oil a day by 2025. This will make our economy stronger and help ease our national security challenges.

The standards will reduce our carbon pollution by over 6 billion metric tons. That’s as much as the whole country emits in a year. This reduction is an important step in our efforts to stabilize the climate.

These carbon pollution tailpipe standards are a win-win-win for the nation, improving our environment, economy, and national security.

But we have more work to do. American families are still getting whipsawed when gasoline prices unexpectedly spike. The money we spend on oil abroad continues to conflict with our foreign policy goals and national security. And the wildfires, drought, heat waves, and extreme weather events tell us that we must do more to address climate change.

In March, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a report concluding that climate change already has led to climate extremes and extreme weather events around the world. As carbon pollution climbs, and as our climate continues to warm, these extreme weather events are likely to become more frequent and more severe. Last year, 14 weather-related disasters each costing more than \$1 billion struck the United States, a record number.

This year has seen even more bizarre weather. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, more than 40,000 hot temperature records have been set this year. The deadly combination of heat and drought has resulted in more than 2.1 million acres burned in wildfires this year. At the end of June, more than 113 million people in the U.S. were in areas under extreme heat advisories.

We are seeing the types of extreme events that scientists have been predicting would come with climate change. For instance, Jonathan Overpeck of the University of Arizona, recently 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.”

We cannot afford to ignore climate change in the development of our energy policies. The two are inextricably linked.

The good news is that as we increase our efficiency and move towards alternative fuels, we not only reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, we also have the opportunity to reduce our carbon pollution. It is not a given that we will make the right choices. Some will advocate today that we abandon our efforts to cut carbon pollution. That would be a serious mistake.

Progress will not be easy, but it is necessary.

We need to continue our push towards alternative fueled vehicles, whether they are plug-in electric drive commuter vehicles, long-haul natural gas trucks, or renewable fuels.

The Obama Administration has made real progress on a seemingly intractable problem. We’re finally heading in the right direction.

I look forward to hearing from today’s witnesses and hope we can continue to build upon this progress.