

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

“Paris Climate Promise: A Bad Deal for America”

February 2, 2016

Thank you Mr. Chairman and welcome to our witnesses. In particular, I'd like to thank Dr. Steer for returning today. Your testimony in December before the Paris Conference was enlightening and greatly appreciated. Today, I look forward to discussing your takeaways from Paris, as well as your thoughts on appropriate next steps that need to be taken to address climate change.

The Paris agreement formalized what many across the world already knew must be done to meaningfully address our most serious environmental challenge. Establishing a commitment to action, not for some, but for all countries, is the first step towards a comprehensive global strategy to reduce carbon emissions.

This commitment demands transparency, again not for some, but for all countries, to ensure that effective policies are put in place and that the objective of the agreement--to limit the warming of our planet-- is accomplished.

We can accomplish this in three ways. First, we need to support the private sector's growing recognition of the threats posed by climate change. In the United States alone, 154 companies signed on to the “American Business Act on Climate Pledge.” Through this pledge, companies like AT&T, Bank of America, Cargill, Coca-Cola, IBM, and even the Walt Disney Company are demonstrating their support for action by setting emissions targets for their operations.

As many of you will recall, days before the Paris climate talks, Bill Gates, along with a group of private investors, announced the creation of the Breakthrough Energy Coalition—a coalition committed to investing in potentially transformative energy systems. Private sector efforts like this illustrate the potential impacts investments in technology can have on achieving both long and short term carbon reductions.

The Paris agreement requires all governments to be consistent with their commitments, and sends a signal to the private sector that a stable framework for action will be put in place, enabling private actors to invest, innovate, and inspire further action.

Second, as our private sector responds to stable market signals, we must continue to identify opportunities for the federal government to invest in research and technologies that put us on a path to prevent a rise in global temperatures above two degrees Celsius. In addition to

helping address climate change, investments in such innovative technologies will propel us forward into a new era of economic prosperity and environmental health.

Third, we must capture the momentum of the Paris agreement and take a leadership role in addressing the challenge of climate change, and not just react to changes as they occur. Maintaining our international commitments demonstrates strength, and provides certainty for all of our partners, including our private sector partners here at home.

As we act in a transparent manner to develop and implement policies to address our own carbon emissions, we will help move other nations to follow our example and achieve an impactful global response to climate change.

I fear that we will hear today many of the same views and arguments that we have heard from the Majority for years. They will warn us of the dire economic consequences of acting on climate change, or suggest that thousands of the world's most respected scientists are wrong about the climate changing at all, or that any actions we take will be pointless. They will portray the Obama Administration as overreaching. They will say all of these things, but, the reality is that the audience for those views is shrinking as the reality of climate change becomes evident.

The rest of us acknowledge the task ahead and recognize that delay is not an option. We must move forward to support policies that will address our climate challenge and trust that our private sector will continue to innovate. The Paris Climate Agreement is a very positive development, and I hope that we will build on it.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, I yield the balance of my time.