

Opening Statement

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

“The Administration’s Empty Promises for the International Climate Treaty”

November 18, 2015

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here this morning to discuss EPA’s Clean Power Plan and next month’s UN climate negotiations. The scientific evidence shows us that we cannot afford to wait, but must act now if we are to stand a chance of lessening the impacts of climate change.

Unfortunately, we’ve crossed a number of significant thresholds in recent months. For example, the World Meteorological Organization reported that the Earth’s average level of carbon dioxide exceeded 400 parts per million in 2015, a level that has not been observed for millions of years.

And as many of you know, the IPCC has recommended that we keep our global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius in order to avoid the most severe impacts of climate change. Regrettably, we are halfway to that critical threshold as a recent report by Britain’s Met Office found the average temperature of the Earth is now more than a degree above the historic norm.

As the largest source of carbon pollution, cutting emissions from power plants is the key to any solution. This is why I am supportive of the EPA’s Clean Power Plan and its goal of reducing carbon emissions from the power sector by 32 percent by 2030.

The final rule we will be discussing today sets reasonable limits that take into account the characteristics of each state. States get to choose what goes into their plans, and they can work alone or as part of a multi-state effort to achieve meaningful carbon reductions. The central feature of the rule is the enormous flexibility it provides to states.

However, we will likely hear again today that the Clean Power Plan will cause nothing but harm to our economy; that the federal government is overstepping its authority; and that the rule won’t make any difference in the long-run.

We will also hear that the President’s climate agenda is “extreme” and that it is being driven by “climate alarmists.” Thankfully, a poll by the Pew Research Center highlights the fact that if we look beyond partisan politics there has been a change in attitude and a clear recognition of the need for action on climate change. Specifically, a majority of respondents in all but one of the 40 countries surveyed support placing limits on greenhouse gas emissions. That includes 69 percent

of respondents in the United States, 71 percent in China, 70 percent in India, and 65 percent in Russia.

I recognize that implementing the Clean Power Plan will not be easy, and that there are real costs associated with transitioning to a low carbon economy. But the bottom line is that the costs of inaction are even greater.

Equally important is that in addition to its long-term benefits, the Clean Power Plan sends a strong and much needed signal to the rest of the world about the seriousness of the United States in addressing climate change. Such a commitment is critical to meaningful international engagement.

I look forward to today's discussion and to learning more about how we can achieve the carbon reductions called for in the Clean Power Plan.

Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.