

OPENING STATEMENT

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Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

“The Administration’s Climate Plan: Failure by Design”

September 17, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’d like to extend a warm welcome to our witnesses, Dr. Holdren and Ms. McCabe. Thank you both for being here this morning. It is nice to see you again and I appreciate you taking the time to appear before us today. This morning we are going to discuss the President’s Climate Action Plan and a part of that plan, a proposal by the Environmental Protection Agency to cut carbon emissions from the largest source of those emissions – power plants.

I’d like to begin by noting the title given to this morning’s hearing by my Republican colleagues, “The Administration’s Climate Plan: Failure by Design.” “Failure by design,” is an ironic choice of words considering my colleagues’ preferred alternative appears to be doing nothing and hiding our collective heads in the sand. We all know that such inaction will not solve anything, and it certainly won’t stop the Earth from warming. In my opinion, the Majority’s “do nothing” plan is the real example of “failure by design.”

I also know that some still question whether climate change is real, but surely we are now beyond debating that question. Reports based on the work of the world’s top scientists such as the U.S. National Climate Assessment and those from the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change have sent a stark message to our nation’s leaders and the international community, namely: the adverse effects of climate change are evident today and require immediate action or these adverse effects will grow dramatically worse.

To be fair, in trying to understand a phenomenon of this magnitude, the job of science will never be done. It will continue to evolve. We must always keep looking for new answers, replacing opinions with data, and projections with observations. We must continue to innovate in how we predict, measure, prevent, and adapt to climate change. That is the nature of science and of our stewardship of the planet.

However, we in Congress have to acknowledge that we are not the experts, and that allowing partisan politics to distort the scientific understanding of climate change is cynical and short-sighted. We may not agree on where the uncertainties within climate science lie, but we should all be able to understand that vast and avoidable uncertainties will remain if we stop the progress of climate research.

Experts from industry, academia, and every level of government are calling on us to help prepare our communities for the threats they face due to climate change. We must answer their call and act.

Cutting carbon emissions from the power sector is critical to any effort to address climate change, and that is why I am supportive of the EPA's Clean Power Plan. EPA's proposal, like the rest of the President's Climate Action Plan, is the bold step forward our nation needs. It gives states the flexibility to develop innovative policies that cater to regional differences. It is based on strategies already in use such as improving energy efficiency and encouraging the development of renewables.

Let us be clear: EPA is not imposing a specific set of measures. States will choose what goes into their plans and they can work alone or as part of a multi-state effort to achieve meaningful reductions. These are common-sense steps that will lead to a healthier environment, because acting on climate change is not only an environmental imperative, but a public health and economic one as well.

Among the many health concerns, greater risk of asthma attacks, heat stroke, and respiratory disease are all consequences of a warming climate. Likewise, energy demand, agricultural production, labor productivity, and the risks to coastal properties are just a few of the economic areas where climate change has already taken, and will continue to take, its toll.

We as a nation must act today to address climate change if we are to preserve our quality of life for our children and grandchildren. The negative consequences of climate change are not abstract scientific predictions for the far-off future. We are facing some of these consequences now and they are affecting every American. I look forward to working with this Administration as it puts forward policies like the Clean Power Plan and the Climate Action Plan, which will ensure a vibrant future economy and a safe and healthy environment. Thank you, and I yield back.