

Rep. Derek Kilmer Testimony on the Need for Actionable Solutions on Climate
House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis
Member Day Hearing
November 14, 2019

Thank you Chair Castor and Ranking Member Graves for holding this important hearing today.

I was born and raised on the Olympic Peninsula in Northwest Washington, in the District that I am now honored to represent, Washington's Sixth.

And there, in the Pacific Northwest, we have a sense of urgency about addressing climate change. That urgency is driven in part, by the fact that we are already seeing its impacts.

Where I'm from, we have four coastal tribes that are trying to move to higher ground due to rising sea levels and more severe storms. Catastrophic wildfires threaten the health and safety of communities throughout the Pacific Northwest. And our region's largest employer – the Department of Defense – identifies climate change as a "[threat multiplier](#)" that makes our world less safe.

This shouldn't be surprising. We've seen decades of scientific evidence that climate change will lead to devastating environmental, economic, public health, and national security consequences.

Climate change is real, and it requires bold action.

Sadly, that commitment to science and that sense of urgency have been absent from the Trump Administration. While President Obama took significant steps to step up to this challenge, President Trump – immediately upon taking office – began [rolling back](#) those policies. He has begun the process to remove America from the Paris Climate Agreement. He's repealed efforts to reduce carbon emissions from power plants and automobile tailpipes.

These actions are wrongheaded. To protect our communities, our national security, and our economic interests, we have a moral obligation to act.

The scientific consensus is that we need to achieve the critical goal of economy-wide, net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. That means we need to catch up to our global peers and competitors. And it means we need to build a politically resilient roadmap that outlasts election cycles.

I serve as the Chair of the [New Democrat Coalition](#), a group of over 100 forward-looking House Democrats who all share a commitment to developing durable policy solutions to our most pressing issues. I'm proud that our coalition created a new Climate Change Task Force to develop an [ambitious and actionable policy strategy](#) to address the threat of climate change.

Our agenda is grounded in three main principles.

- 1. Combating climate change requires global action**

America should be leading the way in combating climate change – not sitting on the sidelines. That’s why, among other strategies, our coalition endorsed the [Climate Action Now Act](#) to recommit to the Paris Climate Accord.

2. Transitioning to a climate-forward economy represents an opportunity to mobilize our economy and create high quality jobs.

Other nations have recognized that combating climate change can lead to new innovations, industries, and jobs. The United States should too. What’s more, we should ensure federal energy and technology policies enable our country to leverage every decarbonization tool available to reach our goals.

Among other strategies, our agenda focuses on clean energy innovation. We’ve endorsed bills to increase federal research and encourage the development and adoption of green innovation.

3. Enacting a climate-forward agenda requires investing in communities, resilience, and relief

We cannot leave frontline communities behind. The House has already passed [three pieces of legislation](#) to expand research and innovation to understand and address ocean acidification and coastal community vulnerabilities. Additionally, we must empower workers and communities to navigate economic change – not to be victims of it.

Earlier this fall, we saw marches taking place all across our nation urging leaders to ‘do something.’ [These young activists made a powerful statement](#). Now, leaders in D.C. need to make real progress.

While D.C. currently has divided government (which has been our reality for nearly a decade), we cannot wait. With each passing day, as more greenhouse gases are emitted into our atmosphere, this crisis becomes more difficult to combat. We cannot afford for solutions to get caught up in partisan battles or for persistent inaction until Democrats hold all levers of power. We need to make progress today.

That’s why the New Democrat Coalition endorsed several bills that have *bipartisan* support in the House and Senate and that can make a difference today.

Our Coalition’s bill endorsements and policy roadmap are just the beginning. We urge both chambers of Congress to move this suite of bills so we can break the log-jam and begin to address climate change with the urgency it demands. Communities in my region and around our plant can’t wait.