

Select Committee on the Climate Crisis
Member Day Hearing
Submitted by Congressman Ted W. Lieu (CA-33)
November 14, 2019

Chairwoman Castor and Ranking Member Graves, thank you for allowing me to testify. Today, I am here to urge you to support two bills I have introduced: H.R. 330, the Climate Solutions Act and H.R. 2360, the Renewable Energy for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands Act.

I believe that climate change is the greatest existential threat to humankind. In recent years, the dangers of climate change—and the need to address it—have become increasingly clear. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the last five years have been the five hottest on record with July 2019 being the hottest month in recorded history. These records have severe consequences. In 2018, the U.S. experienced several major weather disasters resulting in 247 lives lost and \$91 billion in damages.

Beyond these numbers, we can see the climate crisis unfolding before our eyes. Last year, wildfires, including the Woolsey Fire in my congressional district, tore through California making it the most destructive fire season on record. This year, we've seen similar apocalyptic images of fires in the West. At the same time, communities throughout the country are dealing with hurricanes, flooding, and other extreme weather events.

H.R. 330, the Climate Solutions Act

Last October, the International Panel on Climate Change found that limiting temperature increases to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century requires a decrease in carbon emissions to 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030. The urgency of these numbers demands bold action from Congress. That is why I introduced a strengthened Climate Solutions Act to comprehensively address the climate crisis. First, the bill sets out a National Renewable Energy Standard to drive us towards 100 percent renewable energy by 2035. Next, it creates a stringent National Energy Efficiency Standard to reduce energy usage and save consumers money. Finally, my legislation sets ambitious greenhouse gas emissions targets to reduce emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. This proposal has the support of nearly two dozen of our colleagues in Congress and I'd ask you to support it.

H.R. 2360, Renewable Energy for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands Act

In 2017, Hurricanes Maria and Irma struck Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands cutting off access to power for most communities on the island. Without electricity, critical sites such as hospitals and wastewater treatment plants became inoperable, local businesses closed, and performing regular tasks became nearly impossible. It remains clear that we have a unique and necessary opportunity to empower local communities in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to build up renewable energy systems that will remain operable after storms.

That is why I introduced the Renewable Energy for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands Act. This legislation will establish a program at the U.S. Department of Agriculture to award grants to

not-for-profit organizations for the purposes of developing renewable energy systems in local communities. The funds may also be used to improve energy efficiency and battery storage and to train local residents. Finally, the bill will require the General Accountability Office to conduct a study on renewable energy and energy efficiency in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This proposal has the support of Representative Gonzales-Colon of Puerto Rico, Representative Stacey Plaskett of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Representative Raul Grijalva, the Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee.

Conclusion

H.R. 330 and H.R. 2360 will prove critical to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to address the climate crisis and help communities devastated by extreme weather events build back in a more resilient manner. I urge you to include these bills in your final report to the standing committees.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you.