

Statement of Congressman Greg Stanton
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis
Member Day Hearing
November 14, 2019

Chair Castor, Ranking Member Graves, and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to participate in today's hearing.

Climate change is ravaging the American Southwest. Arizona is getting hotter and drier and more vulnerable to disaster. It is screaming out for Congress to do something, for those of us in a position of power to take action.

My home state of Arizona often earns headlines for its ranking as one of the fastest-growing states in the nation. I'm concerned about another ranking, though: That Arizona is the third fastest-*warming* state in the country.

Since 1970, temperatures have risen 3.2 degrees in Arizona. In the cities of Tucson and Phoenix, temperatures have risen 4.5 and 4.4 degrees, respectively. They rank as the third and fourth fastest warming cities in America.

In the West, water is becoming more and more scarce. In Arizona, we are in our 19th year of drought. The federally-funded National Climate Assessment found that rising global temperatures have changed the Southwest's water cycle and decreased snowpack. Less snowpack means less water.

That changing water cycle has created an alarming situation on the Colorado River, which provides water to Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah. The Colorado supplies the city of Phoenix with 40 percent of its water. But it's future is in peril.

The once-mighty river has experienced severe drought conditions since the time of the Clinton Administration. Today, it remains dangerously over-allocated, chronically overused and is on the verge of collapse.

The lack of water is forcing severe change in the Southwest's forest ecosystems and agriculture centers. Wildfires are becoming more frequent, more intense, more destructive, and more deadly. A recent study, cited by the National Climate Assessment, compared total acres burned in western forests under current climate conditions and without human-caused warming. It found that between 1984 and 2015 the area burned by wildfire was double what it would have been without rising temperatures. As a result, wildfires have burned more than 1.5 million acres of pine forest in Arizona.

Climate change is hurting farmers, growers and ranchers too. For the agriculture industry, which has a more than \$23 billion economic impact in Arizona, rising temperatures and water scarcity will change where crops can grow and endanger the health of livestock. All of which has the potential to displace growers and ranchers, impacting rural communities in my state and across the Southwest.

Not only is our environment being impacted by the effects of climate change, those in the Southwest will suffer more health risks as well, including increased risk of exposure to infectious diseases, heat stroke, and more allergy problems.

Cities across the country are doing their part to combat climate change by embracing public transit and energy-efficient buildings, making direct investments in clean, renewable energy.

I'm proud that when I left my post as mayor of Phoenix, we had passed a \$31 billion plan to expand the city's light rail system. We had installed 32 mega-watts of solar energy on city-owned sites. We built one of the largest municipal fleet of clean-energy vehicles in the country. We replaced Phoenix city vehicles with vehicles that run on alternative fuels or electric batteries. Every city garbage truck uses alternative fuels. Three-quarters of city buses run on natural gas.

But it is time for the federal government to step up and take bold action to address it as well.

One easy thing we can do to support our local governments is pass legislation Congressman Marc Veasey and I have introduced, H.R. 2088, to reauthorize the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program. It's a simple reauthorization. This would create jobs, help consumers save on their energy bills, and reduce carbon pollution. In fact, a national evaluation of the program's effectiveness found that just one year of funding avoided the emission of 25.7 million metric tons of carbon equivalent. Imagine what could happen if we provided funding for this program over several years. When this program was last funded, state and local governments were able to pursue a wide range of projects from energy retrofits to deployment of LED street lighting and solar energy systems to EV charging stations and alternative fuel pumps. These same cities and communities, backed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities, support reauthorization of this program.

This is just one of many policy ideas that this committee will hear about and there are many others you should consider. I urge this committee to act with the urgency that this crisis demands before it is too late.