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**Subcommittee on Environment  
U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform**

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In October 1992, the United States Senate ratified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), with the objective to achieve “stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.” Yet for almost 27 years since then, the US Congress has failed to adopt any major legislation to implement this treaty. Since 1992, greenhouse gases have risen relentlessly, with carbon dioxide rising from 357 parts per million in February 1992 to 411 ppm in February 2019. Climate safety is now nearly out of reach, thanks in no small part to the scandalous inaction of the US Congress.

In 2019 it is a bit late to discuss the views of congressmen regarding climate science. Despite the pseudo-debate over climate science in the Wall Street Journal and Fox News, there is no such debate among professional climatologists. The greenhouse effect has been understood by leading scientists in broad terms since the 1861. The predicted effects of human-induced emissions of carbon dioxide were first calculated, with remarkable accuracy, by Swedish Nobel chemist Svante Arrhenius as early as 1896.

In 1965, Lyndon Johnson’s science advisory committee noted that the human-induced rise in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere “may be sufficient to produce measurable and perhaps marked changes in climate, and will almost certainly cause significant changes in temperature and other properties of the stratosphere.”<sup>1</sup> In 1989, UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher warned in a UN speech that “We are seeing a vast increase in the amount of carbon dioxide reaching the atmosphere... The result is that change in future is likely to be more fundamental and more widespread than anything we have known hitherto.” Since 1990, five assessment reports of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have confirmed the human role in climate change.

In 2019 it is a bit late to doubt the threats awaiting humankind if the US Congress persists in its unconscionable inaction. The five hottest years on record have been during the past five years, and the twenty hottest years on record have been over the past 22 years.<sup>2</sup> Temperatures are already 1.1 degree C above the pre-industrial level, and are higher than any decade of the past 10,000 years, the entire span of human civilization.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ozonedepletiontheory.info/Papers/Revelle1965AtmosphericCarbonDioxide.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.climatecentral.org/gallery/graphics/the-10-hottest-global-years-on-record>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.earth-syst-dynam.net/8/577/2017/>

The US and the planet are buffeted by extraordinary heat waves, droughts, floods, forest fires, and extreme storms. The damage from climate-related disasters in the US during the past three years (2016-2018) exceeds \$450 billion, or an average of \$150 billion per year.<sup>4</sup> World-leading climate scientist James Hansen, for 30 years NASA's lead climatologist, recently published the following finding: "Earth is now as warm as it was during the prior (Eemian) interglacial period, when sea level reached 6–9 m higher than today."<sup>5</sup> Hansen concludes that we are at dire risk of a catastrophic rise in sea level.

In 2019 it is a bit late to doubt the practicalities of stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions. Engineering studies have repeatedly demonstrated that we already have the technologies needed to decarbonize most or all of the world energy system, and that comprehensive decarbonization of the energy system is within reach and is economical. The key steps are to shift electricity generation from coal, oil, and gas to renewable, zero-carbon sources, mainly solar, wind, hydro, and geothermal, and to electrify automobiles and home heating. Other energy needs, for shipping, aviation, trucking, and heavy industry, will be met through a combination of electrification and synthetic fuels manufactured with zero-carbon electricity.

In view of these findings, the recent proposals for a Green New Deal make eminent sense, and a decarbonization action plan should be put into legislation as soon as possible. Several recent studies have shown how the U.S. can decarbonize the energy system by 2050. Several states, including California and New York, are already aiming to decarbonize their power sector before that date, yet the federal government is rudderless and without a plan because of the chronic inaction of the US Congress.

In 2019, it is a bit late to claim that the US should not act because other countries will not follow suit. The Paris Climate Agreement provides a mechanism to coordinate global actions. All 193 UN member states signed the Paris Climate Agreement, yet only one, the U.S., has declared its intention to withdraw from the Agreement.

With the science established, the climate disasters at hand, the future risks evident, the technological solutions available, and the diplomatic framework established, the question remains why Congress has so flagrantly failed to pursue the interests of the American people. On that question, too, the evidence is overwhelming. It is widely believed, including by me, that Congress has neglected the science, the disasters, the risks, and the solutions because it abides by the wishes of the oil and gas industry, an industry that endangers the nation and the world in its reckless pursuit of profits.

Much of Congress, especially on the Republican side, has its hands out to the oil industry for campaign funding, as documented in detail at <http://www.opensecrets.org>. In this sub-committee, all five Republican members received campaign support from oil-and-gas PACs

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/time-series>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

during the 2017/8 election cycle, totaling \$171,000, while one of the seven Democrats received a PAC contribution of \$3,000.

For all of Congress, the oil-and-gas sector contributed \$82.4 million, summing over individual contributions, PACs, and soft or outside money.<sup>6</sup> The largest spending was outside money, at \$35 million. PAC spending totaled \$15 million. Koch Industries was the largest single spender in the sector, at \$10.5 million. Of the total oil-and-gas sector contributions to candidates, 87 percent went to Republicans. Of the Koch contributions, 99.4% went to Republicans. Total campaign spending by the oil-and-gas sector since 1990 has totaled \$622 million, with 81 percent of the contributions to candidates going to Republicans.

In addition to the campaign spending, the oil-and-gas industry spends an astonishing sum on lobbying. The sector's lobbying outlays totaled \$124.8 million during 2018, which comes to \$232,000 per member of Congress.<sup>7</sup> The top five lobbying clients were ExxonMobil, Koch Industries, Chevron, Royal Dutch Shell, and the American Petroleum Institute, with a combined lobbying spend of \$46.7 million. The oil-and-gas industry's total lobbying outlays during 2010-18 summed to a shocking \$1.225 billion.

Just before President Trump announced his intention to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement, 22 Republican Senators wrote a letter to Trump urging that action.<sup>8</sup> Every one of those senators was funded by oil-and-gas PACs. The total oil-and-gas PAC spending for the 22 Senators, for the period 2013-18, covering the campaign committee and leadership PAC came to \$5,870,000.

The US major companies themselves are deeply compromised by their lies. They have known all along about climate science and the dangers of their products, but that has not stopped their corrupting behavior and irresponsible continued investments in oil and gas development. The New York State Attorney General is suing ExxonMobil to seek "redress for a longstanding fraudulent scheme by Exxon, one of the world's largest oil and gas companies, to deceive investors and the investment community, including equity research analysts and underwriters of debt securities (together, "investors"), concerning the company's management of the risks posed to its business by climate change regulation."<sup>9</sup>

The American people have lost confidence in the US Congress. Only 11 percent of the public expresses a "Great deal" or "Quite a lot" of confidence in Congress, down from 42 percent in 1973.<sup>10</sup> Only 8 percent described the honesty and ethical standards of Congress as "high" or

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/totals.php?cycle=2018&ind=E01> (accessed April 8, 2019)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/lobbying.php?cycle=2018&ind=E01> (accessed April 8, 2019)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/fe7835f9-4774-43ee-98aa-e4c9bd2802dd/05.25.17-paris-letter-to-trump.pdf](https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/fe7835f9-4774-43ee-98aa-e4c9bd2802dd/05.25.17-paris-letter-to-trump.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://int.nyt.com/data/documenthelper/425-2018-10-24-exxon-complaint/7d82160337839c883934/optimized/full.pdf#page=1>

<sup>10</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1597/confidence-institutions.aspx>

“very high,” compared for example with 84 percent for nurses.<sup>11</sup> Our hopes rest with politicians who are choosing to run their election campaigns without accepting the corrupting money of corporate PACS, and especially oil-and-gas PACs. All politicians should renounce oil-and-gas PACs and return to the business of protecting the American people.

Mr. Chairman, I implore this Committee and the Congress to act without further delay. 27 years of inaction is dangerous enough. I know that I speak on behalf of millions of Americans and billions of people around the world who seek an urgent response to a world in peril.

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<sup>11</sup> [https://news.gallup.com/poll/245597/nurses-again-outpace-professions-honesty-ethics.aspx?g\\_source=link\\_NEWSV9&g\\_medium=NEWSFEED&g\\_campaign=item\\_&g\\_content=Nurses%2520Again%2520Outpace%2520Other%2520Professions%2520for%2520Honesty%2c%2520Ethics](https://news.gallup.com/poll/245597/nurses-again-outpace-professions-honesty-ethics.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=NEWSFEED&g_campaign=item_&g_content=Nurses%2520Again%2520Outpace%2520Other%2520Professions%2520for%2520Honesty%2c%2520Ethics)