

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr.
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Hearing on “Volkswagen’s Emissions Cheating Settlement: Questions
Concerning ZEV Program Implementation”**

December 6, 2016

This is one of the final hearings of the Energy and Commerce Committee in the 114th Congress. Over the last two years, we have worked together on several large bipartisan legislative victories, from a permanent SGR fix to TSCA reform to 21st Century Cures. Unfortunately, I do not believe the Republican Majority on this Committee has properly prioritized many of the environmental challenges that plague our nation and our planet.

Today, we have before us two witnesses from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). I would like to congratulate both of you on the significant and meaningful environmental accomplishments of the EPA and the Obama Administration. And I regret that the Republican majority has not often supported you in these endeavors.

I would like to build upon what others have said about these environmental achievements:

In 2015, President Obama and the EPA announced the Clean Power Plan, the first-ever national carbon pollution standards for power plants. The Plan armed states with flexible, cost-effective tools to cut carbon pollution from power plants. These efforts could prevent thousands of premature deaths and tens of thousands of childhood asthma attacks by reducing air pollution.

In addition to efforts to reduce air pollution from power plants and vehicles, the Obama Administration has updated drinking water standards and taken steps to ensure both urban and rural communities have access to clean drinking water. I'd like to see us do more in this area by updating the Safe Drinking Water Act.

The Obama Administration played a central role in the historic Paris Agreement. The strong international support for this agreement demonstrates the commitment to fight global climate change, adapt to new conditions and to

accelerate the shift to a clean energy economy. In addition to this agreement, the U.S. also formed partnerships with a number of nations to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and transition to renewable energy sources. This includes an agreement with China for both countries to reach targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the coming decades. The U.S. has also dedicated funds to reducing carbon pollution and strengthening resilience in developing nations.

The Obama Administration also set new energy efficiency standards for a variety of appliances and equipment. These will result in significant cuts to consumers' electricity bills and will lead to a reduction of more than two billion metric tons of carbon emissions by 2030.

And then there's the topic we are here to discuss today: the settlement agreement for Volkswagen's two-liter vehicles. VW has committed to removing harmful vehicles from the road or reducing their emissions by 2019. The company must also fund a \$2.7 billion mitigation trust fund and invest \$2 billion in zero emission vehicle-charging infrastructure and in the promotion

of zero emission vehicles. This agreement holds VW accountable for its Clean Air Act violations and secures significant investments for clean air and clean cars.

This list is just a small sample of the environmental accomplishments we have seen in the last eight years. These efforts are improving air quality, reducing childhood asthma attacks, and reducing premature deaths. They are also creating jobs for American workers and new economic opportunities for American businesses.

A responsible Congress and President would take advantage of this forward progress and continue to build on these efforts. Unfortunately, I fear the next Administration will not build upon that progress, but try to reverse much of it to the detriment of public health and the environment.

The President-elect campaigned on the promises to do away with the Clean Power Plan and to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. He also said that he plans to dismantle environmental rules around coal power, open public

lands to oil and gas drilling, and weaken fuel economy standards. Finally, he has vowed to abolish the EPA, or at least, dramatically limit its ability to regulate.

Unfortunately, I fear that we cannot count on the Republican-led Congress to work with us to stop these destructive plans. House Republicans have passed bills to cut EPA funding, cut research funding for renewable energy, and block implementation of rules that would aid our environment and public health. The Senate Republicans have similarly proposed legislation to cut EPA's budget and block critical environmental regulations.

This is alarming. Every day, we see the signs that climate change is harming the world around us. And the longer we fail to act, the worse the consequences will be. According to a Gallup survey earlier this year, concern in the U.S. about global warming is at an eight-year high.

We need to send a clear and unambiguous message that we are committed to working with the rest of the world to combat climate change.

Such a commitment would help us leave our children a healthy and sustainable planet, and help us embrace the deployment of newer, cleaner and cheaper technology that will grow our energy economy.

There is so much work to be done, and we cannot afford to take steps backwards.

I again thank both of our witnesses for being here today and for their longtime dedication to protecting our environment. We need committed public servants like you in this fight.

I yield back.