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House of Representatives
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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Joint Hearing on “Fiscal Year 2014 Environmental Protection Agency Budget”
Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy and Subcommittee on Energy and Power
May 16, 2013

Acting Administrator Perciasepe, thank you for being here today and for your service to the nation at the Environmental Protection Agency.

EPA is making our air safer to breathe and our water safer to drink. The agency is on the frontline of our national effort to address climate change. It’s a huge responsibility and one that all Americans are counting on you to carry out.

I want to take this opportunity to urge you, Mr. Perciasepe, to do everything you can to control carbon pollution. Many different sources and activities contribute to this problem, and we will not be able to address it unless we make reductions across the board. Power plants are of course the largest source of emissions, but so are other major sources like methane from coal mines and oil and gas production. You need to find a way to address all major sources.

Despite the critical importance of your work, the EPA budget represents a tiny portion of overall federal spending. Under the President’s proposal for fiscal year 2014, EPA funding would be less than one-quarter of one percent of the federal budget. And EPA would share almost 40% of these funds with the states and tribes to help them implement federal environmental laws and achieve national goals.

But today we will hear that the agency’s budget is too big. We will be told that we can’t afford to invest in clean air, clean water or a safe climate.

These extreme positions are endorsed by big polluters, but they aren’t supported by the American people. American families want clean air and clean water. They don’t want their health put at risk by exposure to toxic chemicals.

They want their children and future generations to be protected from catastrophic climate change.

We have just crossed a climate threshold. For the first time since humans have lived on our planet, atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide have surpassed 400 parts per million. Scientists tell us that we urgently need to act.

But you wouldn't know that from watching this Committee. Since the Republicans took over the House of Representatives, this Committee has refused to hear from scientists about why climate change is so serious.

We need environmental policies that are based on the best science. And we need an EPA that has enough funds to ensure we keep our moral obligation to future generations. One-quarter of one percent of our budget is not too much to spend on clean air, clean water and a healthy environment. In fact, it's clearly not enough.

Statement as prepared for delivery.