

Opening Statement of Republican Leader Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Energy
“Building a 100 Percent Clean Economy: Solutions for the U.S. Building Sector”
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As Prepared for Delivery

Good morning, Mr. Chairman. This is the second climate change hearing this week, and while Republicans are serious about finding real solutions to address the real issues our constituents are dealing with, Democrats continue to waste time on politics, when we could be passing legislation that already has bipartisan support into law. Let’s change the narrative and put progress before politics.

Mr. Chairman, two weeks ago, we highlighted seven bills that are very close to the finish line, but they require you and your Democrat colleagues to act. I am talking about legislation to promote the development of carbon capture and utilization projects; a bill to reduce wildfire risks through active forest management; a bill to promote advanced nuclear energy technology; a bill to cut energy use in Federal buildings; a bill to remove hurdles to energy efficiency improvements; and, a bill to boost R&D for carbon capture technology development. These are just a few examples where Democrats on the Committees of jurisdiction and on the NDAA Conference Committee could work with Republicans to reduce emissions, promote clean energy, and conserve our natural resources.

When it comes to ways to save energy and improve the performance of the homes where we live and the buildings where we work, Republicans have solutions that are affordable, cost-effective, and appealing to consumers. We don't need a big government solution for everything. With a careful balance of incentives and market-driven policies, consumers will choose the products and services that work best for them.

When it comes to Federal buildings, Republicans support public-private partnerships such Energy Savings Performance Contracts, which offer an innovative solution for the Federal Government to reduce energy consumption at little to no cost to taxpayers.

In my home state of Oregon, we are on the leading edge of developing an innovative new wood product, such as cross-laminated timber, which could be a real game changer for sustainable forest management and low carbon building design. Cross laminated timber has the potential to substantially reduce the carbon footprint of new buildings by replacing steel and concrete with a manufactured wood product in certain applications. These wood products not only sequester carbon, they help us sustainably manage our forests to reduce the risk of wildfire which, as we know in Oregon, contributes to poor air quality and carbon emissions.

Mr. Chairman, rather than following New York and California's example with a "Green New Deal" Federal mandate for buildings, I urge you to work with Republicans on more practical solutions. The costs imposed by these Green New Deal policies fall disproportionately on low income and minority families, many of whom are already forced by the housing crisis to endure long commutes because they cannot find affordable housing close to work. As a result, we end up with more cars on the road and more GHG emissions. This is just one example of the unintended consequences, and precisely why Republicans are advocating a balanced approach that takes these issues into account.

I believe we should encourage the development and use of innovative new building materials such as cross-laminated timber. We should also support the development of new technologies that use less energy, but we need free markets and consumer choice to drive that innovation. Bottom line – the federal government could mandate that architects design buildings certain ways, and mandate that builders build structures certain ways; but if consumers cannot afford what they are designing and building, it is all for nothing.

A top down government mandate will only stifle growth and make homes and buildings more expensive. I firmly believe we can find common ground with solutions that are focused on affordability, cost-effectiveness, and as always, consumers.

As I said on Wednesday, we are waiting at the table and are ready to continue the work we started last Congress. Let's stay focused on real solutions, and let's work together.

Thank you, I yield back.