

**Opening Statement of the Honorable John Shimkus
Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change**
**“We’ll Always Have Paris: Filling the Leadership Void Caused by
Federal Inaction on Climate Change”**
February 28, 2019

Thank you Chairman Tonko. I think a useful purpose of the hearing this morning will be to learn about technologies and actions that are expected to accelerate the reduction of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions.

I’m not sure all these actions will be viable or cost effective. I am also not sure that all these actions will be in the best interest of the United States, especially if they end up putting us at an economic or strategic disadvantage to our global competitors. But it is important to gather this information for the Committee’s future consideration.

Another purpose of this hearing—as you have indicated—is to examine the importance of the United States staying in the Paris Agreement, which President Obama formally accepted in late August 2016, and from which President Trump announced less than ten months later, in June 2017, that the United States would withdraw—under the terms of the agreement.

Fair points may be made about what the Paris Agreement represents in terms of broad-based international cooperation. But that is not really the issue here.

The issue here is how the Obama Administration made expensive commitments that would bind U.S. action without broad-based support from Congressional policy makers. The commitments, the financing pledges, and the costly and

burdensome implementing regulations that would be needed to meet our obligations were not submitted to or approved by the Congress.

Without that national political buy-in on such a complicated policy that would affect all sectors of the U.S. economy, and people's daily lives, it is no wonder a new Administration would change course. The consumer costs and competitive harm the commitments posed to the nation, deserved close and careful attention and approval from policy makers.

And this is not a U.S. problem alone. While other developed nations may be "staying in" the Agreement so far, they are not actually following through on their promises.

The [Climate Action Tracker](#), a European consortium of research organizations, found that nations' commitments will not meet the actual goals in the Paris Agreement. And as the [Washington Post reported](#) on this research last October, most major nations are making few, if any efforts to meet their goals.

The [European Climate Action Network](#), another think tank, reported last summer that *all* European Union countries are off target: No single country in Europe is performing sufficiently to meet Paris Agreement goals. And those that have been making the most progress on their promises, did not make large commitments in the first place.

At the same time, we have the United Nations [Emissions Gap Report](#), released this past November, which assessed the situation and reported that all these countries will have to at least triple their efforts to meet the Paris Agreement's basic goals—

if not increase their goals five-fold to meet more stringent temperature targets. I'm not sure that is going to go so well.

In France, we have witnessed the [Paris riots](#), which were sparked over the government's climate related proposal to increase gasoline taxes on rural French.

In Germany, according to [news reports](#) last week, a climate law to get the nation back on track with its Paris emissions goals by 2030 has been threatening to break up the coalition government. Germany, of course, has turned away from nuclear energy and increased coal production, as well as emissions, over the past five years.

Finally, as we discussed in our hearing three weeks ago, there is the developing world, which is participating in the Agreement, but will produce almost all the growth in future carbon dioxide emissions as billions of people understandably seek access to affordable energy.

The plain fact here is: goals of the international climate agreements, which are to move towards lower emitting systems in energy, transportation, industry, agriculture are not going to work unless there is sufficient, affordable technology to deploy at a massive scale. You cannot get there in a meaningful way with wind and solar without undermining industrial capacity, and economic well-being.

So I will continue to say: Mr. Chairman, when it comes to addressing climate change, let's take action; but let's be smart and pragmatic about it. We should focus on realistic solutions to prepare for the future, and on policies that work for the American public. ###