

Good morning and welcome to the Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change's first hearing of the year.

*(Add anything you might want to say about Mr. Shimkus and welcome to the new members of the Subcommittee.)*

The Subcommittee will now come to order. I recognize myself for five minutes for an opening statement.

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## **Chairman Tonko's Opening Statement**

In 1957, when I was at the impressionable age of 8, Earth entered the space age with the launch of the Sputnik satellite by the Soviet Union.

People around the world stopped what they were doing and looked to the heavens.

Nothing after that would ever be the same.

Americans leapt into action, training to become scientists and engineers in droves. I was one of them.

And I see that same motivation, wonder, and drive in many of the people today who are working and advocating to transform our economy to one that is cleaner, safer, and more just.

They are advancing clean energy technologies, designing the infrastructure of the future that will help communities endure, and rethinking every industry we have ever known.

It goes by many different names: Sandy, Harvey, Maria, Katrina, Camp Fire. But there is no question we have reached a new generation's Sputnik moment. How we respond to this threat, and the opportunities it offers, will shape American lives for generations.

In the 1960s, our government and our nation's best rose to the Sputnik challenge by sending a person to the moon. Today, our course remains unclear.

How our Committee responds at this inflection point will define our nation for the next half century and beyond.

Will we rise to this challenge and tackle our most complex problems? Will we continue to be the world leader in science, engineering, and technology innovation? Will we make our country and planet better for future generations? These questions are at the heart of our work here today.

In 1961, when President Kennedy promised to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade, what would have been the consequences of failure? Loss of scientific discovery? Damage to America's reputation? Ultimately, it would have been remembered as another missed deadline, or failed call to action, or broken promise from a politician.

With climate change, the cost of failure is existential. Failure to launch this next moonshot will result in deaths, devastation, and irreversible damage to our communities, our economy, and our environment.

This is not an exaggeration. It is the assured outcome if we should fail.

But America is a nation of pioneers and problem solvers. This climate challenge is not beyond us. Time is running out, but it is not gone.

Some of our colleagues may protest the costs of climate protection, but our constituents are already paying a heavy price after every hurricane, wildfire, and flood.

Investing in solutions and resilience today will help manage and limit those risks, and serve as a foundation for job creation, healthier communities, and economic opportunity.

But let's be clear, there is no path forward more costly than for us to do nothing.

Today we will hear from an expert panel to help us better understand those costs, along with possible solutions that Congress should consider.

Dr. Brenda Ekwurzel co-authored the Fourth National Climate Assessment and can explain climate threats our nation is facing.

Mike Williams can discuss job opportunities that will come from a clean energy transition, including from building more resilient infrastructure to adapt to new climate realities.

Rev. Leo Woodberry can tell us the importance of a transition that is equitable. We must address historic environmental injustices and ensure that benefits of a green transition are shared across every community.

Rick Duke can discuss a range of potential policy and technology solutions for climate mitigation, many of which are cost competitive and proven to work.

In the decade since Congress last considered comprehensive climate legislation, clean technologies have become more affordable and effective. Today there are viable decarbonization pathways for many sectors of our economy that will enable our nation and the world to achieve emissions reduction targets.

Congress can give the certainty, price signals, and resources needed to achieve these goals.

In 1961, we chose to go to the moon. Today, we must make another choice. Will we have the clarity of mind and conscience to choose to address climate change with the urgency that scientists say is necessary?

I say yes. Chairman Pallone says yes. Every Member on this side says yes. And we are willing to work with the legions of Americans, countless businesses, local, state, and foreign governments, our U.S. Department of Defense, and anyone else with ideas that can solve this crisis.

To my friends across the aisle, I implore you: join us! We want to work together, but inaction is no longer an option. We must act on climate.



These issues were not always partisan. Our parties came together to pass the Clean Air Act and its amendments. And as a credit to Mr. Shimkus's leadership, this Subcommittee found ways to work together to solve other seemingly intractable, multi-decade stalemates. We have proven we can find common ground and get things done.

We want to find solutions that work for all communities and all Americans, and we will not be deterred. We have science-based targets that we cannot afford to miss.

The very real and urgent threat of climate change is not just the issue of the day. It is the issue of our time. The challenge of our time. The opportunity of our time. And I hope the hearings held by this Subcommittee will help us find a path forward where we can seize this opportunity. I yield back.