

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Greg Walden  
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**

*As Prepared for Delivery*

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was struck by the title of this hearing. For the past six months Paris has seen continuous protests that began over ill-conceived policies designed to meet obligations under the Paris Agreement. Regular people are taking to the streets to oppose heavy handed regulation and taxation that threatened economic prosperity and cripple their ability to provide for their loved ones. So, I am not sure if the title was intentional but we should remember Paris and the Yellow Vests when debating policies that have real, every day impacts on hard working Americans.

As you know, Republicans are ready and willing to work with you on policies to address climate change risks. We have a growing record of bipartisan legislation in this area that is helping to drive implementation of cleaner technologies—and more can be done. But we should all be wary of resurrecting policies that are economically and technologically unworkable for the American public.

A central theme of today’s hearing concerns actions that will help the nation meet the U.S. commitments in the Paris Agreement under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change. Some of these actions, on their own merits, may be worth additional examination and I look forward to hearing from the witnesses about them.

However, we should not forget the serious questions concerning costs, effectiveness, and feasibility of the U.S. commitments made by the Obama Administration under the Paris Agreement three years ago.

In a number of Committee hearings in the runup to the Paris negotiations, we examined closely the costs and impacts of the [Clean Power Plan](#) and related EPA standards that were the central policy for electric sector emissions reductions.

We learned how these policies sought to rapidly transform the nation’s electricity system—from a system designed for the economical and reliable dispatch of power to a system focused on meeting federal emission caps. This radical transformation, which Congress opposed, would have driven out major sources of affordable energy, threatened reliability and security, and driven up consumer utility bills.

We learned that, even with the economically harmful impact of these and other policies targeting the fuels we use and cars we drive, the goals proposed for the Paris Agreement still could not be met. The policies, according to the Administration’s own estimates, could get maybe [60% of the way there](#).

Even Secretary of State Kerry [noted during the Paris negotiations](#) that if the United States, or even all of the developed world, cut their CO2 emissions to zero it would still not offset the emissions coming from the rest of the world.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Secretary Kerry stated: [“The fact is, even if every single American biked to work or carpoled to school, and used only solar panels to power their homes – if we each planted a dozen trees – if we somehow eliminated all of our domestic greenhouse gas emissions – guess what? That still wouldn’t be enough to offset the carbon pollution coming from the rest of the world. If all industrialized nations went down to zero emissions, it wouldn’t be enough – not when more than 65 percent of the world’s carbon pollution comes from the developing world. No matter how much half the world does to clean up its act – if similar steps aren’t taken by the rest of the world, the Earth still has a problem.”](#)

In short, commitments in Paris were made without a clear plan to meet those promises, without a full view of the costs, and certainly not a plan that had broad bipartisan support of Congress.

This focus on U.S. commitments in the Paris Agreement as a centerpiece of our nation's climate policy misses the point on what we should focus on if we want to make a difference in global emissions while strengthening our economy.

We should not lock ourselves in to a narrow vision of what is possible. We must consider the realities of global energy systems and the need for affordable, reliable energy access around the world.

Let's continue the work we have been doing in the past few Congresses that will reduce the barriers to innovation and enable the United States to deploy new technologies to drive our economic engines of the future and make realistic headway in curbing emissions, from advanced carbon capture to nuclear technology to innovative hydropower.

We must also improve forest management to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires that choke communities in Oregon with smoke and fill our atmosphere with untold pollutants. Better managing our forests reduces the risk of these catastrophic fires and the toxic emissions they put into the atmosphere. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found that sustainably managing our forests will create the longest sustained carbon mitigation benefit. Congress should follow the science on forest management.

As we've said before, we are ready to begin the process of finding commonsense, bipartisan solutions to climate change. Instead of extreme agendas like the Green New Deal or looking backwards to unworkable policies that increase energy costs, limit innovation, and stifle economic growth, we should focus on the proven success demonstrated in the tremendous economical, security, and environmental benefits created through America's energy innovation over the past decade.

We want America's innovators to continue to develop the next technologies that will improve the environment and create jobs here at home. We want a healthy environment for our children, and future generations. We want our constituents and all Americans to have jobs and the opportunity to provide for their families. These are not mutually exclusive principles, and they are embedded in our approach to confronting climate risks. Let us work on them together.

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