

## **Mr. Tonko's Opening**

*The Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change will now come to order. I recognize myself for 5 minutes for the purposes of an opening statement.*

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In February, this Subcommittee held a hearing examining President Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement.

Since that announcement, states, cities, businesses, and universities across the country have stepped up to say they are still in. And they are not only making pledges but are taking concrete actions.

While this Administration has failed to rise to the challenge of our climate crisis, others are leading the way and keeping our national emissions reduction targets within reach.

Investing in infrastructure, creating local jobs, and transitioning to a clean energy economy are goals that leaders on both sides of the aisle, at all levels of government, should be able to support.

That is why 23 states have joined the U.S. Climate Alliance, and more than 400 local governments have joined the Climate Mayors network; organizations that are helping state and local governments work together and encourage greater action.

Today, we have a chance to learn from some of the elected officials now leading our nation's climate response.

This includes a former colleague who served on this committee, Governor Jay Inslee of Washington.

Thank you Governor, and welcome back to the Energy and Commerce Committee.

During his time here, Governor Inslee was a leader on clean energy and climate issues. He played a major role in developing the American Clean Energy and Security Act and in transformative clean energy investments included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. He also co-founded the House Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition, which I am proud to co-chair today.

Governor Inslee, along with former Governor Jerry Brown and my governor, Andrew Cuomo, founded the U.S. Climate Alliance. The states in the Alliance represent more than half of the U.S. population and almost three-fifths of the U.S. economy.

I cannot think of a better witness to share the experiences of states transitioning to a cleaner, healthier, more competitive, and more sustainable economy.

Local governments are also doing their part, implementing solutions to transition their communities and create good paying jobs while doing it.

Today we ask: what can Congress learn from state and local experiences? And how can our federal government be a better partner in these efforts?

This Committee has established itself in recent years as a force for bipartisan environmental legislation including drinking water infrastructure, brownfields redevelopment, and nuclear waste cleanup.

And in every case we started with these same questions.

Our response to climate action should be no different.

We are at a crossroads in the climate crisis. If we are going to meet this crisis head on, we will need every idea and proposal we can muster. I recently released a set of climate principles that should help guide our efforts in Congress to develop legislation.

Before coming to Congress, I ran a state energy office and served in state and county government. I know how much work gets done at these levels. They do not have the luxury of burying their heads in the sand when climate change comes to their communities and threatens their constituents.

It is falling upon them to harden their infrastructure and deal with increasingly frequent and severe wildfires, flooding, droughts, and air quality issues.

These disasters jeopardize property values and undermine local tax bases. In some cases, they threaten future economic development and revitalization, especially waterfront development.

We have seen the damaging effects of climate change extend far beyond natural disasters. It is hurting tourism, recreation, agricultural production, and other industries that many American communities rely on.

Empowering state, local, tribal, and territorial governments needs to be at the foundation of our climate response in Congress.

State and local leaders are often in the best position to enact innovative policies to promote a cleaner economy and deal with climate damage.

We also need to recognize that we live in a big country. Each state and region faces unique challenges. Program flexibility is critical.

Today, as we hear from mayors from across the country, we need to make sure they have the tools and resources necessary to meet their needs.

Some solutions will be best suited for federal action, but a comprehensive approach will take all hands on deck. Other levels of governments will need to adopt policies that work for their unique local conditions.

A few of these locally driven programs may include efforts to strengthen community resilience, increase energy efficiency through building codes and energy benchmarking, improve the efficiency and operation of municipal buildings, and promote cleaner transportation options, including transit and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

But despite the exciting testimony we will hear this morning, let's not fool ourselves. Subnational action is not a substitute for greater federal leadership. America's response to the climate crisis needs to be a partnership, and currently the federal government is not holding up its end of the bargain. I yield back.

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