

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Greg Walden  
Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change  
“Building a 100 Percent Clean Economy: Opportunities for an  
Equitable, Low-Carbon Recovery”**

*As Prepared for Delivery*

Today’s hearing comes as my home state of Oregon and much of the west reels from devastating wildfires. In Oregon over 40,000 people are displaced, lives have been lost, thousands of homes have been destroyed, and an area the size of Rhode Island has burned. Our hearts go out to all those impacted by these catastrophic fires.

Sadly, our federal forests have lacked proper management for years, resulting in our federal forests becoming tinderboxes, with nearly 63 million acres of national forest the Forest Service has determined needs fire prevention treatment. This is something we should all be able to agree on.

Proper forest management reduces fire risk, lowers carbon emissions from fire and creates good jobs. It also allows us to utilize our natural resources in a sustainable way to protect and grow our communities and our forests.

Today’s hearing is also relevant in the wake of California’s most recent rolling blackouts, affecting hundreds of thousands of people in the

middle of both a heat wave and pandemic. There is a lot we can do as a nation to improve the reliability and resilience of our electric grid.

We have to prioritize energy security and affordability for consumers and use experience and science as our guide for our energy policy. We share the goal of a clean economy. Republicans put consumers and innovation first, as we balance many complicated issues impacting our economy, our environment, and our national security.

Regrettably, California's current energy crisis was predictable and it was avoidable. California policy makers ignored the scientists and the engineers who maintain the electric grid and instead mandated their version of the Green New Deal. California forced the retirement of the most stable base-load nuclear and natural gas fired power generation, without a reliable backup option in place.

California regulators, I believe, failed in their most basic responsibility — ensuring adequate electric generation is available whenever and wherever it is needed.

As a result, hundreds of thousands of Californians were forced to endure rolling outages, when they needed their electricity the most. In fact, had the Bonneville Power Administration not been able to ramp up

hydropower generation on the Columbia and Snake Rivers, it would have been even worse.

If California — the world's fifth largest economy — can't keep the lights on during a heatwave, that is a serious warning for anyone considering placing these mandates on the rest of the nation.

I'd also like to highlight another major challenge we must confront: growing reliance on foreign sourced critical minerals, which serve as raw ingredients to manufacture all kinds of electronics, batteries, solar panels, and windmills. These critical minerals are largely controlled by China and mined beyond our borders and without our high environmental and worker safety standards. This is a supply chain issue I hope the Committee will look at.

The U.S. has an extraordinary abundance of mineral resources, both onshore and offshore. We're the world's number one producer of oil and gas, and a leading producer of coal. These traditional energy resources have powered our nation's economy and strengthened our hand diplomatically.

Today, we are more energy secure than ever in the history of the United States. Millions of people have good jobs in the energy industry,

and our businesses and consumers have some of the lowest and most stable energy prices anywhere in the world.

Despite our abundant energy resources, we rely on other countries for dozens of other vital minerals. We are 100% net import reliant on some minerals used in many electronics, batteries, solar panels, and windmills. If the vision is to power the nation on these technologies alone, we may be in serious trouble.

As we have learned from this pandemic, our reliance on foreign and especially Chinese supply chains is a strategic vulnerability. Given our innovative strength and the progress we've made to become energy secure, it would be unconscionable to sacrifice these gains for a Green New Deal fantasy that bans hydraulic fracturing and discards decades of progress. Let's learn from the mistakes of the past – and not move too quickly without a full understanding of the facts.

Is transitioning to 100% renewables and electric vehicles a good idea if it means we are going to be 100% dependent on China for the materials to produce them? Do Americans want to transition to 100% renewables if it means rolling electricity blackouts? These are the issues I know the Committee takes seriously.

We need to have a serious, solutions-oriented discussion about dealing with climate change. We all want clean, affordable, and reliable energy options. The question is, what is the best way to get there?

So, Mister Chairman, thanks for the hearing. I look forward to it.

Thank you, I yield back.