

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.**

Hearing on “Back in Action: Restoring Federal Climate Leadership”

February 9, 2021

Two years ago, when Democrats took control of the House, the first hearing our Committee held was on the climate crisis. And throughout the Congress, we worked tirelessly to develop the legislative solutions needed to address the climate crisis. The Committee followed up that first hearing with a dozen more hearings on deep decarbonization, met with countless stakeholders, and drafted the first comprehensive climate legislation in the House in a decade: the CLEAN Future Act. Now, as we begin this new Congress, one of this Committee’s top priorities remains combating the climate crisis.

The science is clear: We must achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 if we’re to avoid the most catastrophic consequences of climate change. And we must take decisive action this decade to ensure we’re on a path to reaching that target.

With this urgency in mind, I’m thrilled that the Biden Administration has hit the ground running on climate. Before stepping into the White House, President Biden promised an ambitious, sweeping approach to tackle the climate crisis. Within his first week in office, he began making good on that promise.

On day one, the President rejoined the Paris Agreement, reestablishing U.S. leadership on the global stage. He then signed a suite of additional actions on climate and environmental protection. These measures include steps to reverse the Trump Administration’s climate rollbacks and move us forward toward clean electricity, clean cars, and conservation while pursuing environmental justice and economic revitalization.

For too long, communities of color, low-income communities, fenceline communities, and others on the front lines of climate change have borne the brunt of environmental injustice without equal opportunity to participate in the regulatory process. But I’m really encouraged by the Biden Administration’s approach because it balances immediate steps to advance equity and environmental protection with a robust consultation process for environmental justice communities to plan future actions. As that process moves forward, this Committee will play an essential role in enacting legal protections for overburdened communities to empower this Administration and ensure equity.

President Biden’s early actions also underscore what we have long argued – that climate action presents a unique opportunity to revive our economy and create good, well-paying jobs in promising new industries. The world is moving toward a clean energy future. The question is whether we choose to lead to ensure our workers actually benefit from that transition.

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The President's early climate actions are an important part of his jobs agenda. President Biden is working to ensure that as we build back better, we create opportunity for all Americans. His Administration's early actions put workers at the heart of the clean energy transition, including by applying strong labor and wage standards. This Committee will play a critical role in advancing legislation to revitalize our nation's infrastructure using well-paid workers and clean materials made in America. An infrastructure package similar to the Moving Forward Act from last Congress will modernize our crumbling infrastructure, help rebuild our economy and combat climate change.

President Biden also recognizes that the transition to a clean future will affect different communities in different ways. That's why he established an interagency working group focused on creating economic opportunity for communities impacted by the shift away from fossil fuels. Again, this Committee will play an important role in fostering economic revitalization for communities undergoing energy transitions.

Taken together, the President's early actions to address the climate crisis are a welcome change from the previous Administration. It's a new day for climate and environmental action in the United States, and this Committee is ready to lead.

Today's witnesses will highlight the significance of President Biden's climate actions, but they'll also highlight the role that Congress, and this Committee, will have to play. The Administration has many tools at its disposal – but the fact is, without additional legislative action, we cannot fully address the scale, scope, and urgency of the climate crisis. And legislative action can provide even more tools to ensure our communities and workers are well positioned to benefit economically from the ongoing transition to a clean energy economy.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how and where Congress must step in, including how legislation like the CLEAN Future Act can advance our climate goals.

Thank you.