

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on “America Leads the Way: Our History as the Global Leader at Reducing Emissions”

November 29, 2023

Today we will examine America’s leadership in combating the worsening climate crisis as we head into the 28th UN Climate Summit – known as COP28. We need to demonstrate our nation’s commitment to standing with our allies in the fight against climate change. After all, we are out of time for denialism and obstruction. The science on climate change is indisputable. Earlier this month, the Fifth National Climate Assessment underscored the need for urgent action to combat this threat.

And while the United States has taken steps to dramatically cut greenhouse gas emissions, more action is needed now to avoid the most catastrophic consequences associated with climate change. We can, and must, protect our communities from the devastating impacts of the climate crisis, while growing our economy and cutting costs for consumers, as we lead the way in the global clean energy transition.

Yet time and again, House Republicans have prioritized their polluters over people agenda. They have tried to undermine and repeal critical climate programs established in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act – despite these programs helping communities in their district. Republicans have also peddled in climate denial. They have also attacked the Biden Administration for proposing regulations to address carbon pollution from the oil and gas industry, power plants, and vehicles. And while Republicans tout an “all of the above” energy approach, they continue to push back against policies that accelerate clean energy development and reduce emissions.

So I think it’s time for my Republican colleagues to change course because their polluters over people agenda is costing taxpayer dollars and lives. Our nation now experiences an extreme weather event with damages over \$1 billion once every three weeks. These events are deadly, and they are destroying homes and livelihoods. COP28 provides an opportunity for the United States to demonstrate climate leadership on the international stage. Climate change is a global problem and that means we need both domestic solutions and international cooperation.

This year, countries will participate in the first Global Stocktake – the most extensive assessment of global climate action. This will help inform future commitments by parties to the Convention – including India, Russia, and China. America’s participation in COP is essential if we are to hold nations accountable to their Paris commitments while driving more ambitious actions moving forward.

The Biden Administration has already displayed climate leadership in preparation for this year's conference. China and the United States recently agreed to set reduction targets for all greenhouse gases, marking the first time that China has committed to addressing super-pollutants like methane and hydrofluorocarbons. This is critical since China is the world's largest methane emitter.

Democrats understand the seriousness and urgency of the climate crisis. That's why we passed historic climate legislation last Congress. These policies are already creating new jobs, cutting costs for working families, and advancing homegrown clean energy – all while tackling the climate crisis. The downpayment in these laws, along with the strong regulatory framework proposed by the Biden Administration, will complement our nation's international efforts. We simply must use every tool in our toolbox if we are going to stop the worst-case climate scenario.

Many states, local governments and individual businesses are already moving forward to reduce emissions. It's imperative that the federal government lead the charge and help them in these efforts and spur further action in communities across the country. We must discuss ways to help communities better adapt to the changes that we're already seeing. We need to modernize and upgrade our infrastructure to ensure vital services like water, sewer, electricity, telecommunications, and transportation are more resilient. This important work will make our communities safer and better prepared for extreme weather events, and will provide good paying jobs, and the modern, flexible infrastructure that will help us grow our economy for the future.

As we move forward, we would hope that this is a bipartisan effort, that we join as partners – Democrats and Republicans – to address climate change and take climate action. Because, after all, the worsening climate crisis affects all of us.

I yield back the balance of my time, thank you.