

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of**

**Subcommittee on Environment, Manufacturing, and Critical Materials Ranking Member
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***Hearing on “America Leads the Way: Our History as the Global Leader at Reducing
Emissions”***

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Thank you, Mr. Chair. America has made undeniable progress in reducing air pollution. This should be celebrated. The Clean Air Act is an incredible success story. But as the 28th UN Climate Change Conference of Parties begins, today’s hearing should be an opportunity to be clear-eyed about what we have achieved, how we have achieved it, and how much more work is left to be done. Because there are still big challenges. For example, despite a 78% reduction in criteria pollutants since the enactment of the Clean Air Act, according to the American Lung Association’s 2023 “State of the Air” report, nearly 36% of Americans— almost 120 million people— live in places with failing grades for unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution.

And we know there is a similar story for climate pollution. There is a clear scientific consensus about the threat of unmitigated climate change, and we are already experiencing environmental, public health, economic, and national security impacts from it. To avoid the worst consequences of climate change and stay well-below a 2-degree global temperature increase, as agreed upon in the Paris Agreement, the United States must do its part by achieving net-zero emissions around mid-century.

Yes, there has been a 17% reduction of domestic greenhouse gas emissions from 2005 to 2021, but this has generally been the easiest 17%. It is obvious that we require much deeper and more rapid decarbonization than what has been achieved since 2005. The good news is more progress will likely be achieved in the near-term thanks to the work led by Democrats to enact the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which are supporting clean energy technology deployment and manufacturing all across the country.

And while these incentives are important, innovation is often not be possible without a mix of carrots and sticks. Air quality improvements brought about by the development of pollution control technologies and less-polluting alternatives can often be directly traced back to EPA regulatory actions. Does anyone honestly believe that major reductions in tailpipe pollution would have happened absent regulations? Or that the progress we have made to reduce particulate matter and ozone were not in large part a result of the NAAQS?

Or that EPA’s Acid Rain program was not a factor in reducing sulfur dioxide? There are countless examples of EPA rules playing a driving factor in emissions reductions. Another recent example has been the AIM Act to phasedown the production and use of super-polluting hydrofluorocarbons.

American chemical and equipment manufacturers recognized that the United States could be the global leader in the next generation of less-polluting alternatives to HFCs. And these entities wanted regulatory certainty to make that transition happen in an orderly manner. The AIM Act is proof that Democrats and Republicans, and industry and environmentalists, can still come together to support a flexible but also ambitious regulatory framework that will guarantee major air pollution reductions while spurring innovation and creating American jobs.

There is no reason why we cannot do the same for other pollutants, including carbon dioxide. Finally, I appreciate the majority's hearing memo's acknowledgement that many American industries are cleaner than their foreign competitors. Thanks to efforts by Congressional Democrats and the Biden Administration, we are ushering in a manufacturing renaissance, which will build American supply chains for the key, strategic industries that will be part of the global clean energy transition.

We are set to witness major growth in energy-intensive industries, such as direct air capture, electrolytic hydrogen production, data center operations, and semiconductor, EV, and battery manufacturing. We must support these emerging industries in their efforts to produce the most climate-friendly version of their products.

If U.S.-made goods have lower embodied carbon, we should recognize and promote that. This Committee could play its part in expanding Buy Clean procurement policies and understanding the issues around carbon border adjustment mechanisms. Smart climate policies can and should be designed to promote the competitiveness of U.S. energy-intensive industries, ensuring that American manufacturers play a critical role in the global transition to a cleaner economy.

So, Mr. Chairman, while I certainly appreciate us taking the opportunity to celebrate America's successful environmental laws, we would be remiss if we believed the job is done. I hope we can work together to help chart a course to achieving further pollution reductions. Thank you. I yield back.